Reviewer’s report

Title: An analysis of the potential barriers and enablers to regulating the television marketing of unhealthy foods to children at the state government level

Version: 1 Date: 5 August 2012

Reviewer: Jennifer Harris

Reviewer’s report:

This paper is clear, concise and well-written. The methodology is appropriate for the research question and I do not have any questions about the data analysis.

Major compulsory revisions

1. This manuscript would provide a much greater contribution to the field if the authors applied their findings to regulation of unhealthy food advertising to children in other countries. For example, the authors could discuss the demise of the proposed Interagency Working Guidelines on Foods Marketed to Children in the U.S in the discussion. The power of the food industry, the need for evidence of a causal link between advertising and eating behaviors and effectiveness of regulation, and the need for community support and framing as an environmental issue all came up during the discussion of this proposal. Public health researchers in the U.S. have also proposed that state and local governments can provide a testing ground for new policies that, if successful, could increase political will to take on the issue at a national level. A sentence about applicability outside Australia should also be included in the conclusion of the abstract.

Minor essential revisions

2. The title should reference Australia to be clear that the research did not involve other countries with states (e.g., United States).

3. Similarly, I assume that the first sentence of the abstract and the third sentence of the introduction refer to government action in Australia, since government actions have been implemented elsewhere. These sentences also should be worded to clarify that they refer to Australia.

4. In the United States, there are several structural barriers to state-level regulations regarding television food advertising, such as laws against limiting interstate commerce and media delivery at the national level (most of children’s exposure to food ads on TV occurs during national, not local, programming). In the introduction, the authors need to explain the provisions for regulation of television advertising by individual state and territory governments in Australia for those who are not familiar with Australia’s regulatory and media structure. Is most television programming in Australia delivered at the state/territory level, do state and territory governments have regulatory authority over television that originates elsewhere, or is there some other mechanism to make this option feasible?

5. I assume that this journal has asked for the methods to appear at the end of
the document. To provide some context for the numbers that follow, it would be helpful to include an introductory sentence at the beginning of the results that describes the participants and how many there were.

6. It is not clear which contributing categories go with each theme in Table 1. The theme should line up with the first relevant category or the table should include horizontal lines to separate the themes.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests