



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

September 15<sup>th</sup> 2005

### **Parents Call for Regulations on School Food and Physical Education**

Results of a survey released today from The Parents Jury show that parents overwhelmingly support state government regulations on the type of food available in schools and on mandatory hours of physical education.

**97 per cent of parents surveyed were in favour of state governments regulating on healthy school food, including food sold in canteens and vending machines as well as food used in fundraising activities and classroom rewards.**

Nationally, only 9 per cent of parents were "very satisfied" with their state government's current commitment to promoting healthy school food. 51 per cent were "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the current situation. Victorians expressed the greatest level of dissatisfaction with 72.5 per cent being dissatisfied.

*"I think that governments need to get tough on the situation and ban junk food completely from schools so that our kids can grow up thinking that healthy eating is the norm .... My father works as a school cleaner and he says that most of the bins at lunchtime are full of uneaten sandwiches and fruit as the kids can get their hands on junk food too easily." (The Parents Jury member)*

**95 per cent of parents supported state governments regulating on mandatory hours of physical education in schools.**

Parents were more favourable about their state government's current commitment to promoting physical education in schools with 29% "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied". Victorian parents expressed similar levels of satisfaction to the national averages.

Parents overwhelmingly agreed on the importance of physical education programs in schools, but many expressed concern that schools often use other learning area teachers as replacement physical education teachers. Many parents also commented on the need for physical education in schools to be more inclusive, less competitive and to have a greater emphasis on fun.

*"If they (government) were really serious about the obesity epidemic they would put more effort into funding programs." (The Parents Jury member)*

The Parents Jury is a web-based forum for parents to voice their views and to collectively advocate for the improvement of children's food and physical activity environments (for example, reduced marketing targeted at young children, healthy school food, and making neighbourhoods safer and more child-friendly). The Parents Jury polled its 640 members for the survey.



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## Quotes from members of The Parents Jury

### On school food:

*“(government regulations are) Absolutely imperative if we wish to educate our children appropriately, but more importantly children need to be in an environment where they can learn, concentrate and have fun without being stuffed full of sugar and additives. They also need to understand what happens to their bodies and minds when these foods are digested. We have a responsibility to give children a fair chance”*

*“We tried in NSW for over 30 years to ask people nicely to change their canteens. We supplied them with helpful suggestions and materials but few made the change. The workers in canteens felt powerless to tackle the sellers of junk and so welcomed the regulations which took the onus off them to argue with sellers of junk food and drinks.”*

*“As a parent I would welcome regulations being introduced as a way of further educating our kids to eat more healthy food. At the moment the multinational junk food companies just have open slather on what is provided at school canteens – with no consequences for the deteriorated health of our children.”*

*“Food and exercise have a direct link, if the Victorian government is prepared to mandate for exercise then they need to support parents by regulating food in canteens.”*

### On physical education in schools:

*“I think that the physical education should be conducted by a qualified teacher. It is important children know how to throw a ball, and how to play a particular sport, so that there is a greater chance of success/enjoyment, and therefore a greater chance of the children continuing to play sport/s at an older age.”*

*“If PE is mandatory, the emphasis should be on making it fun and involving activities that do not rely on competition.”*

*“I believe that set aside time for physical activity is very important at school, it helps children to work as a team, to explore their abilities in a nurturing environment and have fun and gain physical stamina.”*

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