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**9th April 2014**

**Open Consultation Process Regarding:**

**POLICY BRIEF: Options to reduce sugary sweetened beverage consumption in New Zealand**

**Official Submission Form**

1. **Your Information**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Title:*** | Co-ordinator, Public Issues, Methodist Church | | |
| ***First name:*** | Betsan | ***Last name:*** | Martin |
| ***Organization:*** | Public Issues Network, Methodist Church | | |
| ***Organization type:*** |  | ***City/region:*** | Wellington/National |
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| ***Conflict of interests:*** | - | | |

Please note that formal submission should be sent to [g.sundborn@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:g.sundborn@auckland.ac.nz) with the subject heading: **Consultation Submission** not later than **9th May 2014**.

1. **Formal Input on the document -**

**POLICY BRIEF: Options to reduce sugary sweetened beverage consumption in New Zealand**

Methodist Public Issues appreciates the opportunity to submit on Sugar Sweetened Beverages.

As an overall principle we strongly support regulation to eliminate SSB’s from school canteens, as well as the public health and education initiatives to support the management and control of the consumption of SSB’s.

**Regulation re SSB’s in Schools**

Public Issues (PIN) supports the provision of healthy food in schools. We urge the restoration of the clause that ‘only healthy foods be sold in schools’ into the National Administration Guidelines by the Minister of Education. This effectively would eliminate the availability of SSB’s in schools.

The proposal for a corresponding 20% excise tax would be effective as a deterrant for sales of SSB’s. PIN agrees with such a tax and that the money raised should be used for health promotion and for marketing restrictions on the sale of unhealthy foods and beverages.

**Education and Public Health**

Public Issues appreciates the six point policy briefing on SSB’s. Our strongest recommendation is to support the regulatory proposal, No. 1 as outlined above.

The other 5 strategies are extremely important for developing public awareness of healthy food and for supporting and encouraging public and personal responsibility for healthy food and discernment in purchasing and consumption. We note that poverty is a risk factor, as healthy food is less available in low income communities and is generally less affordable. The issue of poverty and the particular exposure to risk of consuming SSB’s by low income people is not identified in the briefing.

**Opportunities and strategies in churches**

We see this initiative as an opportunity to bring the issue of food purchasing choices to churches and will use your policy brief as a resource to do so. We do have some leadership in such initiatives already. You may have advice on initiatives that you outline in relation to supporting schools to take up healthy food policies, engaging with health professionals, and initiating relationships with industry.

The Methodist church has strong memebership of Pacific communities. We have discussed the benefits of producing flyers and other resources such as a DVD in Samoan and Tongan languages. However the guidance we have been given is the preference for spoken face-to-face comunication supported by ensuring that SSB’s are not available, and that healthy food is offered at church functions. There is scope for a DVD presentation in the language of the community.

A major factor of SSB’s is the low price. This is very enticing for low income people. With the impacts of poverty disproportionately experienvced by many Māori and Pacific communities, the matter of unhealthy food and drink is tied to poverty. Raising the price through an excise tax is clearly an important strategy of deterrance. Of course, making healthy food available at affordable prices is a corresponding public halth initiative that is needed.

**Conclusion**

Overall PIN fully supports all the avenues for healthy food and for eliminating / or strongly deterring the use and availability of SSB’s outlined in the Policy Briefing.

The NZBGP briefing provides a valuable resource for our advocacy in parishes for healthy food regulations and choices, and it also serves as a prompt to promote the practices you outline, and to provide information . Clearly churches are significant purchasers of food in their varied activities and services.

With warm regards

Betsan Martin

Public Issues Co-ordinator

Methodist Church