

Should junk food be banned at school? Two mums go head to head.

Shauna and Jo

Most schools still sell junk food. Why one mum thinks it's great, and another wants it banned.

NO – Kids need to learn to make good choices.

By Shauna Anderson

The thought of banning junk food in schools makes me fear for the generation of adults these children will become. A walking talking cast of zombies, unable to think for themselves or make judgments about their boundaries. A generation of adults so used to restrictions that the tiniest chance of rebelling makes them cast aside all their inhibitions. A generation unable to educate their own children about nutrition because they never learned to make their own choices.

Of course there is a problem with obesity in Australian children, but a myriad of problems are contributing to that – junk food advertising, inactivity, too much screen time, badly manufactured food...

It is a whole society problem – not one that should just be tackled in schools. Junk food shouldn't be banned from schools. What's next? A ban on computers because we blame them for obesity?



Throughout Australia there are different approaches to what foods are allowed at schools in lunch boxes and to be served at canteens. In NSW, VIC and QLD a “traffic light” system applies with foods categorized according to their nutritional benefits.

This system works. Kids can occasionally indulge in the ‘red light’ foods. They learn about food choices.

Children’s education:

Children need to learn to think for themselves. They need to be educated to make healthy choices, they need to understand the consequences of what they are eating, to just blanket ban junk foods is such a lazy approach.

Kids should be involved in packing their lunch boxes, in sampling different foods, and in choosing to occasionally bring in a bag of Cheezels on a special occasion.

Parental responsibility:

So just because some parents are simply too lazy to be bothered to make their children a healthy lunch, the rest of the children – those who do know moderation, who do practice responsible nutrition, who are in control of what they eat have to suffer. Why is that right?

Parents need to take control of what they feed their kids, not the schools.

The fun police strike again:

There has to be some fun left. Already we’ve seen bans on cartwheels and soccer games, on playing brandings and swapping animal cards.

An occasional packet of chips, a juice once a week at lunchtime, an ice block on a hot day.

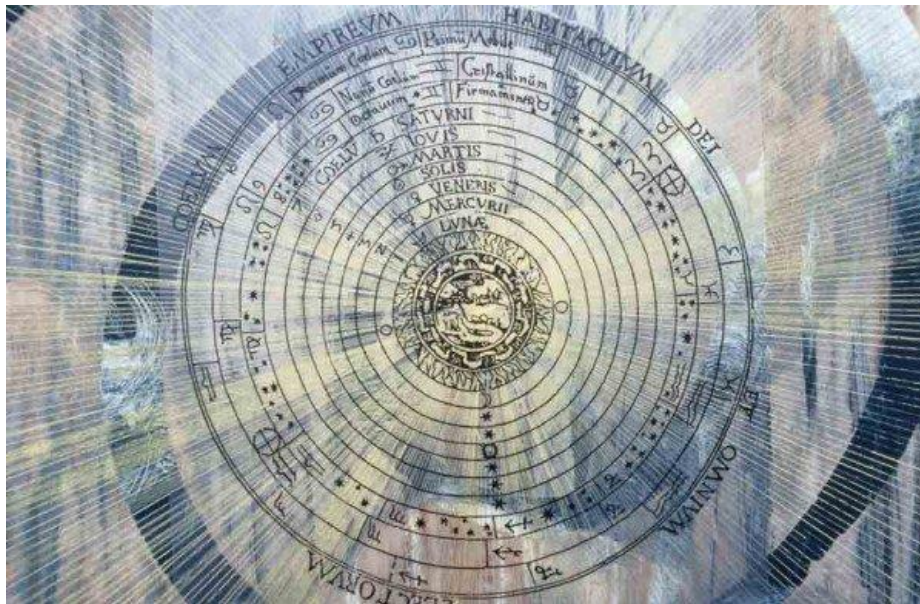
There would not be a seven year old in Australia who doesn’t find that a delight.

A chocolate heart slipped into your lunch box by Mum on Valentines Day? A cupcake on the teacher’s birthday? A bacon and egg roll at the Father’s Day breakfast? Why should we restrict these choices because of fear mongering? Why can’t children have the ability to choose these treats at the appropriate time and place and learn to appreciate these foods as a treat?



YES - It's hard enough to get kids to eat healthily.

By Jo Abi



Every day I face a battle to keep my children healthy. I have to balance their food intake, their exercise, I make sure they are dressed warmly and are looking after themselves. I pack healthy lunches. Occasionally they get a treat and lunch orders are a once a week event.

My life would be a lot easier if junk food was banned in schools. Children are at school five days out of seven. Imagine how influential it would be if they only sold healthy food?

My children's school tries to limit junk food provided to students but there's always something. They have a treat at school, at a friend's house, while we are shopping, at a party... I can only control my children's food intake so much without being a total Scrooge. I want them to have junk food sometimes, but schools need to support parents efforts to keep our children healthy. Together we can make a real difference to Australian children's health.

This is why I want junk food banned in schools. They need to be in a completely healthy environment in school and that includes the food that is on offer at the canteen. If schools only served healthy foods and drinks it would be a huge weight off parent's shoulders and it would send the right message. It would teach them about healthy foods and support the health messages they are being taught in class. When they do use the canteen they can choose from choices like sandwiches, sushi, salads and plain milk.

We are in the midst of an obesity crisis in Australia. Drastic action is needed. It's been predicted that for the first time, we are raising a generation that will not outlive us. How can we let this happen? It's a health crisis.

I recently found out that my son has been buying garlic bread almost every single day since he started school. He always has money in his wallet for the bus and for drinks. I noticed he was going through it faster than he should have then found out where it was going? What is a school doing selling garlic bread, cheesy pizzas, nuggets, chicken chipees and potato smilies?

Why are they selling meat pies and sausage rolls? These are not the kind of foods I want my children exposed to on a regular basis.

Schools need to back up health messages and support parents who are struggling to limit the amount of junk our children eat. Get rid of junk food in schools and set a better example for our children.

Do you think junk food should be banned in schools and school canteens? Does your child's school sell junk food? How do you control their food intake?