

## Media release

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### Crossbenchers unite to call for stronger regulation of harmful product marketing

Crossbench MPs have joined forces to urge the Albanese Government to legislate stronger regulation on the marketing of harmful products including gambling, junk food, alcohol, and fossil fuels.

Citing the systemic targeting of children, Dr Sophie Scamps, Zali Steggall, Rebekha Sharkie, Allegra Spender, Andrew Wilkie, and Dr Helen Haines called for the government to close loopholes that allow industry to saturate broadcast and social media with harmful product marketing.

The crossbenchers also focused on the role harmful products play in contributing to chronic disease and the increasing burden this places on Australia's already under pressure healthcare system.

The crossbench push comes one week after Zoe Daniel MP introduced her Private Members Bill to ban gambling advertising. While Dr Sophie Scamps MP will also introduce her Private Members Bill to regulate junk food advertising before Parliament's winter break.

#### Quotes from crossbench MPs (in the order they spoke in Parliament):

##### **Quote from Dr Sophie Scamps MP, independent member for Mackellar:**

"One in four children in Australia are already on the path to chronic disease because they are overweight or obese. If we continue standing by while children are being deluged by junk food advertising every time they go on social media or watch TV, then we are failing them.

The current regulations are not strong enough and we know self-regulation does not work. It's time Australia joined the 40 other countries around the world that have or are planning to implement regulations to protect children from pervasive junk food marketing."

##### **Quote from Zali Steggall MP, independent member for Warringah:**

"Greenwashing is a deceptive marketing tactic that has become a powerful weapon in the fossil fuel industry's arsenal, hindering climate action while millions pay the price. There are over eight million deaths per year associated with the effects of burning fossil fuels on top of the catastrophic risks climate change poses globally. Straight from the tobacco, gambling and alcohol industries handbook, fossil fuel companies seek social licence by greenwashing their activities through advertising and sponsorship."

##### **Quote from Allegra Spender MP, independent member for Wentworth:**

"Australians are being overwhelmed by advertising for products that are harmful to our health. It's especially worrying to see our kids targeted on social media by ads for gambling, alcohol, and junk food.

We spend millions of dollars dealing with the consequences, when we should be trying to tackle the root cause – the aggressive marketing of gambling, alcohol, and junk food.

The crossbench has done the heavy lifting. It's time for government to step up, let the parliament debate the crossbench bills, and reform the Privacy Act to stop our children's data being harvested to push harmful products."

**Quote from Andrew Wilkie MP, Independent Member for Clark:**

"Not a week goes by that someone doesn't tell me of their disgust with gambling advertising. They hate it, and the Federal Government would promptly ban such advertising if they care more about the community than the gambling companies."

**Quote from Kate Chaney MP, independent member for Curtin:**

"Online advertising raises new challenges. We have entered an age of surveillance capitalism. We let tech companies gather sophisticated data about our kids. They sell it to companies selling harmful products, who use it to manipulate our kids' behaviour. It's not a fair fight."

**Quote from Kylea Tink MP, independent member for North Sydney:**

"The 1990s was a golden era of reform which saw how tobacco products were marketed and sold significantly reshaped. It took a concerted effort from multiple players over a number of years, but we got there and for many years now Australia has provided the world with examples of best practice that they then emulate."

I'm proud to have played a small part in that work back then, and believe we are seeing real momentum building around reform in the areas the marketing of gambling, junk food and alcohol. Positive change doesn't just happen though – it takes multiple voices and for this reason I'm not only excited to add my voice to these calls this time around but would encourage anyone who wants to see real change take place on these new frontiers to speak up now. We can take what we learned and apply it here."

**Quote from Dr Monique Ryan MP, independent member for Kooyong:**

"Maintaining health of our population is one of the government's most important responsibilities."

Commercial entities can actively harm the Australian population's health – and increase inequity – if we don't regulate their activities appropriately. Alcohol, sugary foods, gambling, and tobacco use profit multinationals but can really harm Australians."

I'm keen to work with other MPs to achieve responsible legislation around the marketing of alcohol, sugary foods, and gambling."

**Quote from Zoe Daniel MP, community independent member for Goldstein:**

"From the moment they become aware of the screens that surround them, our children and young people are assailed with sophisticated marketing designed by adults to seduce them into the consumption of harmful products from food to alcohol to gambling. It is high time parliament acted to rein in this whole spectrum of harm."

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