7 September 2011

New Zealand Parliament
WELLINGTON

Dear Sir

Submission to Inquiry into Price of Milk

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Price of Milk.

The role of the Physical Activity and NutritionCoalitionHawkesBay (PANC HB) is to provide nutritional and physical activity strategic advice, support and advocacy to the community of HawkesBay. Therefore our submission will provide commentary in this regard.

Membership of PANC HawkesBay currently consists of HealthHawkesBay (Te Oranga Hawkes Bay), Sport Hawkes Bay, Hawkes Bay District Health Board, NgatiKahungunuIwi Incorporated.

We would like to make the following comments –

Hawke's Bay – Our Community …

Using projections based on the 2006 census Maori are expected to make up 24.5% (37,600) of the Hawke’s Bay population in 2008, compared to 15.1% nationally, while Pacific People will make up 3.2% (4,850) of the Hawke's Bay projected population in 2008.

Both Maori and Pacific people in Hawke’s Bay have a younger age structure than that of the non-Maori and non-Pacific population.

In 2008 children aged 0-14 years comprise 22.4% of the Hawke’s Bay population (projected), compared with 20.8% nationally.

Hawke’s Bay has a higher proportion of its population in the 65-84 year age group in 2008 compared to New Zealand (12.5% versus 11.0%).

All cause mortality in Hawke’s Bay in 2006 is statistically significantly higher than national.

Life expectancy at birth by ethnicity and gender

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<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hawke's Bay</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central region</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>82.2</td>
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There is a correlation between deprivation and life expectancy. “Levels of income are associated with health outcomes. People on lower incomes are more exposed to health risk factors such as poor diet and lack of access to health services, which can lead to poor health outcomes.”

(HBDHB, 2010)

Health Issues …

* Maintaining good nutrition is vital for healthy ageing. Poor nutrition increases the risk of hospitalisation, disability and mortality and is associated with declines in quality of life and loss of independence. Studies on nutritional risk amongst community living older people in Australia, Canada and the UK have found that between 30% and 50% of participants were at risk.

* The recent nutritional risk survey conducted by Hawkes Bay DHB and EIT on community dwelling older people in Hawke’s Bay indicated that inadequate milk and milk product consumption was one of the two highest barriers to optimal nutrition

* MOH recommended daily allowance for calcium for older people is higher than adults being set at 1300 mg per day. This is virtually unattainable without dairy products or alternatives (calcium enriched soy and rice milks) as these are the main sources for calcium

* Reduced calcium intake is a risk factor for osteoporosis which affects more than ½ of women and nearly 1/3 of men over the age of 60 years

* MOH recommend older people to eat 3 servings of milk or milk products per day for optimum health

Health Benefits …

* Milk is of high nutritional value by containing all the essential amino acids.

* Milk is an excellent source of readily absorbable calcium and phosphorous and milk and milk products provide over 75% of the calcium in the human diet in Western countries.

* Milk contains moderate amounts of potassium, sodium, magnesium and zinc.

* Milk can be an important source of iodine because the sterilizing solutions used in some dairies contain iodine and traces get into the milk.

* Milk carries B group vitamins, particularly riboflavin and vitamin B12 and the fat-soluble vitamins A and D.

* Milk is the only source of lactose in nature. Lactose enhances the absorption of calcium and phosphorus from the intestine.

* Milk is an important food for young persons and frail older persons. Milk and milk products have a role in the prevention of Osteoporosis in later life.
Social Issues …

Latest research from the University of Auckland supports recent claims that many low-income families are unable to afford even a basic nutritious diet for their children.

**It is estimated that 15% of the Hawke’s Bay population are living in the most deprived group (Dep Level 10) compared with only 10% nationally.**

A paper published in *Nutrition and Dietetics* in December 2010 found that low-income families may not be able to afford meals recommended by the national nutritional guidelines, especially if there are teenagers in the household whose meals cost a lot more.

Maori and Pacific People across Hawke’s Bay have a higher proportion of people living with low incomes. Across all ethnic groups Wairoa District has the highest proportion of people living with low incomes.

Professor Asher (Child Poverty Action Group) says, “In reality, rent is the highest cost faced by most families, closely followed by unavoidable expenses such as electricity, transport and school-related costs. This leaves little for a good diet, especially for older children who eat so much more. Nutritious food for children is beyond the reach of many low-income families, especially those thousands of families ineligible for the full Working for Families package. This study clearly highlights that using food banks and purchasing cheap poor-quality food is not always a matter of choice."

**The cost of basic food items have increased over the last year, exemplified by the rise in milk price - 9%.**

Nutrition experts are increasingly concerned about the impact of food insecurity on the most vulnerable members of our society. Food insecurity is a lack of access to safe, nutritious and affordable food and according to research from the University of Otago not only affects nutrition and physical health, but also the mental health of New Zealanders.

Vicki Robinson, Public Health Dietitian and author of the recent report “Food Costs for Families” comments “Food insecurity is a significant problem in New Zealand with results of the National Nutrition Survey , 1997 and the Ministry of Health National Children’s Nutrition Survey, 2002 revealing that 20-22% of New Zealanders experienced a lack of food security or food insecurity with much higher rates in Pacific and Maori.”

The role of the milk industry is crucial to improving access to, and the cost of, milk. There are multiple levels of potential for intervention to encourage healthier option choices:-

- Food related research considers health as well as economic outcomes
- Improvement of affordability through industry leadership including collaboration between food industry and public health to create a shared agenda supporting government regulation,

The overarching question for the select committee is whether New Zealanders are paying too much for milk – having access to nutritious, cost effective food choices should not be a privilege within our community. The land of milk and honey is costing its core resource off its own market.
Recommendations …

- PANC HB urges the New Zealand Government to consider the implications on the health of our nation through a pricing structure for milk that makes it cost prohibitive for a growing number of our population.

- PANC HB urges the New Zealand Government to consider removing GST from the cost of purchasing milk.

PANC HB
Contact:
Sue Taaffe
Health HB Ltd
Health Promotion Co-ordinator
PO Box 11141, Hastings 4158
sue@healthhb.co.nz
Ph 06 8715659