

Item #35

Memorandum: "Meeting with New Zealand Medical Association"

Excerpt from briefing for a meeting with the New Zealand Medical Association, prepared by the Ministry of Health for the Associate Minister of Health, sent 28 March 2017

Extract from briefing “Meeting with New Zealand Medical Association”, sent 28 March 2017

Tax on sugary drinks

7. In December last year the NZMA called for the Government to put in place a tax of 20 percent or more on sugar-sweetened beverages. Stephen Child has stated that sugar-sweetened beverages are a major source of sugar in the diet and that vulnerable populations most at risk are most responsive to changes in the relative prices of food and beverages.
8. To prevent and manage obesity in children and young people the Government launched the Childhood Obesity Plan in October 2015. The Plan is a package of 22 initiatives that are targeted interventions to increase support for those who are, or are at risk of, becoming obese. A sugar tax was not included as part of the Plan as there is insufficient evidence at this stage that a tax would be effective in reducing obesity and improving health outcomes.
9. The Government is keeping an active watch on international evidence. Studies show a decline in consumption of sugary drinks following the introduction of a tax in Mexico. However, these studies do not control for other things which changed at the same time (eg, a comprehensive public health campaign and fundamental improvements to drinking water infrastructure). Professor John Gibson of Waikato University is undertaking a major international empirical study using robust methods. It will report in 2018.

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