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Media Release

Are kids really media savvy: or are we advertising them to death?

At an important conference on children and the media to be held in Melbourne on March 9, both international and local speakers will discuss **'The corporate takeover of childhood'** and ask **'Who's paying the price?'**

Rob Moodie, Professor of Global Health at the University of Melbourne's Nossal Institute, and past CEO of VicHealth, Australia, will present a paper called "Advertising to Death". This presentation portrays childhood obesity, binge drinking and tobacco related illnesses as commercial successes of the 20th and 21st centuries. He argues that these commercial successes have been fuelled by advertising that not only normalises unhealthy behaviours but shapes our culture to make these behaviours special and desirable resulting in a lot of profit and a lot of avoidable death, suffering and disability.

This conference, presented by the Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM) and Macquarie University, will focus on the way in which society convinces children that their happiness, and their very identity, depends on what they buy and what they own. Yet, the evidence shows that consumerism doesn't make children happier or healthier. This raises the question: How can we make sure healthy child development is given due consideration in exploitative commercial environments?

Stephen Kline, author of *Globesity* and Professor in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, will present on "Fast Food/ Sluggish Kids: Researching Media Saturated Domesticity". The central theme of Kline's recent research is that children are the 'canaries in the coal-mines' helping us to better understand the broader disruption of family life implicit in our media saturated lifestyles. He argues that to 'innoculate' children against commercial persuasion through advertising literacy is both inadequate and wrong-headed given the multiple risks associated with children's media saturated lifestyles.

Other speakers include Jane Caro (Gruen Planet), Professor Elizabeth Handsley (ACCM President/Flinders University), Professor Douglas Gentile (University of Iowa), Professor Sharon Beder (University of Wollongong), Dr Wayne Warburton (Macquarie University), Dr C Glenn Cupit (ACCM Vice-President/UNISA), Dr Wendy Varney (author of 'This Little Kiddy Went to Market'), Sarah Court (Commissioner, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission) and Julie Gale (Kids Free 2B Kids).

For more information about the **'The corporate takeover of childhood: Who's paying the price?' conference** visit http://www.childrenandmedia.org.au/mediachildren/03_15_seminar_melb312.htm. To book go to <http://www.trybooking.com/BAIY>.

ACCM is a unique national community organisation, which strives for a media environment that supports the health, safety and wellbeing of Australian children. It is committed to promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children's media.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please email clare@youngmedia.org.au or call on 08 8376 2111 or 0434 146 096.