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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Baroness Peta Buscombe: It is time to face up to uncomfortable truths

Commenting on the outcome of a House of Lords debate today on the advertising of foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) on television, Baroness Peta Buscombe, Chief Executive of the Advertising Association, who spoke in the debate, said:

“Obesity is a hugely important and multi-faceted social issue that must be taken seriously. Unfortunately this Bill proposing a 9pm watershed is a classic case of a quick fix solution to a complex problem. Advertising is an easy target, but advertising bans have unintended consequences and won’t tackle the root causes of the problem of obesity”.

“Not only would a watershed be damaging and disproportionate, it is not evidence-based and certainly not rational to introduce yet more changes when the current ones are only just being phased in at the present time”.

“Advertising is an easy target when politicians do not want to blame either themselves or the lack of responsibility exercised by their constituents. Yet if we really want to tackle the root causes of obesity this is where we should be looking. It is time to end the increasingly hysterical calls for bans, restrictions and bandwagons and time instead to look for common sense, clarity and real solutions. It is time for government and politicians to face up to uncomfortable truths.”

Responding to the debate, the Minister speaking on behalf of the Government rejected the Bill, supporting Ofcom’s measures, and saying that there was no single solution to the problem of obesity.

Although Baroness Thornton's Private Member's Bill proceeds to Second Reading in line with normal House of Lords convention, the Government’s rejection of it means that it is doubtful that it will be given Parliamentary time.

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Notes to Editors:

1. The Advertising Association (AA) is a federation of 31 trade bodies and organisations representing the advertising and promotional marketing industries, including advertisers, agencies, the media and support services in the UK. It is the only body that speaks for all sides of an industry that was worth almost £19 billion in 2005. Further information about the AA, its membership and remit is available on our website at: <http://www.adassoc.org.uk/> The Food Advertising Unit (FAU), operates under the auspices of the UK Advertising Association, is a centre of information, communication and research in the area of food advertising, particularly television advertising, to children. FAU membership represents multinational food companies, advertising agencies and the media. Further information about the FAU is available from the Unit's website at: <http://www.fau.org.uk/>
2. The Baroness Peta Buscombe, Chief Executive of The Advertising Association – speech made in the House of Lords today. Baroness Buscombe's speech can be downloaded from the following location: <http://www.adassoc.org.uk/>
3. Ofcom's final decision on food advertising on television was published on 22 February 2007. It imposed a mix of content restrictions on all food advertising, and volume restrictions on HFSS food products, the effect of which halves children's exposure to food advertising. Ofcom extended the volume restrictions to HFSS ads in programmes with a high proportion of under 16's watching.
4. In its decision, Ofcom rejected a pre-9pm watershed ban on HFSS food advertising, on the basis that it would be neither proportionate nor, in isolation, effective. Ofcom recognised that this solution would not be sufficiently targeted and would be disproportionate. Its Chief Executive, Ed Richards, said such a ban would reduce broadcaster revenues by a sum greater than the entire commercial TV industry's combined expenditure on all children's programming and national news coverage, cutting *"a swathe through quality British made programmes on our TV screens"*.