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Posted November 17, 2006 in [\[Corporations\]](#)

Jill Stark - The Age

15 November 2006

LESS than 24 hours after Coca-Cola said it did not market to children, The Age can reveal that the soft drink giant is the main sponsor of the annual Australian Scouts Jamboree - a 12-day event for 12,000 youngsters mostly aged between 11 and 15.

Angry parents and nutritionists have accused Coca-Cola of targeting children at the \$11 million event to be staged at Elmore, near Bendigo, in January.

The conglomerate will sell its products exclusively and has signage rights on the site, which will encompass a 40-bed hospital, police and fire stations, a shopping centre and an airstrip. It even has naming rights to the main stadium: the Coca-Cola Arena.

On Monday, federal Health Minister Tony Abbott accused Coca-Cola of fuelling Australia's childhood obesity crisis.

In response, the company issued a statement saying: "We do not advertise our products to children under 12."

Kathy Chapman from the Parents Jury, a group concerned about the influence of soft drink and junk food marketing, said gaining a prominent presence at a major event was a typical tactic for companies.

"Kids are just not discerning enough to realise they're being manipulated," she said.

The chief director of the 21st Australian Jamboree, Peter Mentiplay, said that without Coca-Cola and other major sponsors including Nestle, Uncle Tobys, Kelloggs and SPC, the event might not go ahead.

"For 12,000 Scouts this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. With non-stop physical activity and fun for 12 days, plus healthy meals and lots of water . . . I doubt parents will worry if their children enjoy the occasional soft drink or ice-cream."

A spokeswoman for Coca-Cola said a wide range of products including water, juice, coffee and carbonated soft drinks were chosen by Scouts Australia.

The company's presence at the jamboree was consistent with a policy not to market to children under 12, she said.

"This is an event for secondary school-aged young people, the great majority of whom are over 12 years of age . . . our agreement with Scouts Jamboree is not a marketing initiative, it is a product supply agreement."

Food marketing expert Gawen Rudder said the food and beverage industry was "running scared".

"Companies like Coca-Cola and Nestle are carefully positioning themselves in a public way and saying, we're into the health and wellbeing business. But the core product of Coca-Cola is still Coca-Cola, just like the core product of McDonald's is the Big Mac."

Dr Tim Gill, from Sydney University's Centre for Public Health and Nutrition,

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said the industry was "crying poor".

"For years they laughed at anyone suggesting they should be doing something (about obesity). Now that . . . everyone's turning against them they're crying victimisation and it's hard to have any sympathy."

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