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NEW RESTAURANT

School fat fear over Maccas

Bethany Hiatt

Education Editor

Plans to build a two-storey McDonald's outlet within 400m of Applecross Primary School have sparked community concerns that it will affect children's health by fuelling the obesity epidemic and increasing traffic in suburban streets.

Angry residents, most of whom first heard on Sunday of the proposal to build the 24-hour restaurant at the corner of Reynolds Road and Canning Highway, will outline their objections to a development assessment panel tonight.

Maria Beilin, who works in obesity research and whose daughter attends the school, said US research showed that students with fast food restaurants near their schools were more likely to be overweight.

Applecross Primary School parents were also concerned about the safety of children walking or riding their bikes to school because the drive-through restaurant would attract extra traffic. Reynolds Road, which provides a direct

route to the school, was designed to take 3000 cars a day but now caters up to 3800 vehicles.

This is predicted to increase to 6300 if the development goes ahead.

Reynolds Road resident Sam Langley, who has two children at the school, said she was worried about antisocial behaviour spilling into the neighbourhood as well as the big increase in traffic.

Lisa Wood, of the University of WA's school of population health, said the concern was not just about whether young

children would get junk food on the way to and from school.

Allowing a fast food outlet so near a school gave the wrong message about what is normal.

"Young kids are so vulnerable and impressionable in terms of what those normative cues are," Dr Wood said.

"And we're in such an uphill battle at the moment with obesity in terms of all the messages that young people are bombarded by."

A spokeswoman for McDonald's said it did not target sites near schools but they were often

in the same area as shopping precincts and transport. She said McDonald's was committed to improving the nutritional value of its food.

"This is an appropriate development for the site," she said.

Local MP Dean Nalder has asked the central metro joint development assessment panel to reject the application because the location does not conform to the City of Melville's community planning scheme and the development would negatively affect local road users and residents.