



Making it easier to choose healthier

## BACKGROUND

December 2015

# Why and how we developed ACT Health's Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy.

In March 2014 ACT Health released its *Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy* (the Policy) that aims to increase the range of healthy food and drinks that are provided and promoted to ACT Health staff, volunteers and visitors at ACT Health facilities and events.

## Why has ACT Health developed the Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy?

The rising level of overweight and obesity among the population represents one of Australia's biggest public health challenges. Obesity and poor diet are major causes of chronic disease and disability. With almost two-thirds of ACT adults and one in four Year Six children overweight or obese, it is a serious issue that affects us on every level, from individuals and their families through to the wider community, the health system and the local economy.

At ACT Health, we understand the importance of leading by example. That is why we have committed to making healthy food and drink choices more readily accessible to our staff, volunteers and visitors to our facilities. It is a simple but effective way we can help people to make healthy choices every day.

## What is the Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy all about?

The Policy specifies, through Nutrition Standards, the types of food and drinks to be provided and promoted in a range of supply situations, including:

- food outlets such as cafeterias, cafes and shops
- vending machines
- catering
- fundraising

Food and drinks have been classified according to their nutritional content using a traffic light system, to guide decisions about what can be provided and promoted under the Policy.

- **GREEN** (best choices) – contribute a wide range of nutrients and generally low in saturated fat, sugar and salt.
- **AMBER** (select carefully) – contribute some valuable nutrients but contribute considerable amounts of saturated fat, added sugar and/or added salt. Also may provide excess kilojoules.
- **RED** (limit) – low in nutritional value and may be high in saturated fat, added sugar and/or salt. May also provide excess kilojoules.

Nutrition Standards set out the proportions of **GREEN**, **AMBER** and **RED** food and drinks that can be provided and the requirements for advertising, promotion and placement of food and drinks, so that the healthy choices become the easy choices.

## Here is a snapshot of how the Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy will affect you.

- The majority of all food and drinks provided at ACT Health facilities and events should be **GREEN**.
- No more than 20% of the products available in food outlets and vending machines are allowed to be **RED**.
- **RED** food and drinks must not be supplied for catering and fundraising.
- Only **GREEN** food and drinks should be advertised, promoted and positioned in prominent locations or associated with ACT Health sponsorships.
- Alcohol is not to be provided for catering, fundraising, gifts or rewards.
- Tap water should always be available free of charge to staff and visitors.

Note that the Policy **does not apply** to food and drinks paid for by individuals and brought from outside ACT Health for personal use, nor to food and drinks provided to inpatients as part of their care.

## What was the process for developing the Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy?

- Establishment of a Steering Committee to provide ongoing advice about the development of the Policy.
- A survey of ACT Health staff about healthy food and drink choices in the workplace.
- Audits of all vending machines and food outlets across ACT Health to assess the availability and variety of healthy food and drinks.
- Consultations with staff and stakeholders that included six workshops and feedback on a discussion paper.

## What were the Nutrition Standards based on?

The Policy's Nutrition Standards are based on both the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and adaptations to the *National Healthy School Canteens: Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Drinks Supplied in School Canteens 2010* to make them suitable for adults as well as children. Information about the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* can be found at the [Eat For Health website](#).

## How is the Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy being implemented?

The implementation of the Policy commenced with a 12-month transition period to give ACT Health staff, food outlets and vending machine suppliers sufficient time to review the food and drinks supplied and to make the necessary changes to catering choices, food outlet menus and vending machine products.

Support is provided to staff to help them implement the Policy, including fact sheets, training and a support service for queries and assistance. Nutrition and business advice is available to assist food outlets to review food and drinks supplied and to make the necessary changes.

## How is the Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy being evaluated?

The evaluation of the Policy includes:

- surveys of ACT Health staff awareness, attitudes and food/drink behaviours
- audits of food and drinks in vending machines and food outlets
- feedback from staff and food outlets

## What is happening at the whole of government level?

On 1 December 2014, the ACT Government released the [ACT Public Sector Healthy Food and Drink Choices – Vending Machine Management](#) policy. The requirements of this policy for healthy vending machines were based on the vending machine requirements of ACT Health's Policy. Vending machine suppliers that comply with the *ACT Public Sector Healthy Food and Drink Choices – Vending Machine Management* policy will also be compliant with ACT Health's Policy.

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate is currently leading the development of a broader ACT Public Sector healthy food and drink choices policy based on the one that exists within ACT Health.

## Want to know more?

If you have any questions, send us an email [healthpromotion@act.gov.au](mailto:healthpromotion@act.gov.au)



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Healthy Food and Drink Choices is part of the ACT Government's Healthy Weight Action Plan to create environments where making healthy lifestyle choices is easier