

Promoting and supporting Healthy food & drink choices

at school



Joint statement from the Council of Australian Governments Education Council and Health Council

Purpose

This joint statement is a call to action to schools, families and communities, in partnership with government and the education and health sectors, to build on practices that support and encourage healthy food and drink choices at school.

Setting the scene

Good health is fundamental to a happy and prosperous life. Healthy eating, along with daily physical activity and other healthy habits are the building blocks for good health in childhood and into the adult years.

Healthy eating supports optimal growth and development, protects from illness and enables successful learning at school, performance at sport and capacity for achievement in other life endeavours.

However, most children are not consuming enough healthy food and drinks with around 40 per cent of a child's daily energy intake coming from unhealthy options. The result is a low intake of essential nutrients, poor oral health, and high rates of overweight and obesity that can lead to serious short and long-term health problems.

A whole of community approach

Promoting and supporting the development of healthier food and drink habits requires a broad community-wide approach where schools are one part of an overall effort. Governments, community groups, parents and carers, food businesses, media, sporting organisations and children themselves have a role in enabling a healthier future. Although considerable activity is already occurring in communities, more can and will be done to support children and families live healthier lives.

Schools play an important role in creating cultures where healthy food and drink choices are 'the norm'. Significant progress has been made to improve the food and drink choices sold and provided at schools and school events and, to enhance the teaching and learning of food and nutrition. We recognise these efforts and acknowledge the positive impact of creating a healthy food and drink culture. School communities can continue to build on these successes and improve outcomes for children.

Call to action

The Health and Education Councils call on all school communities, in partnership with governments and the education and health sectors, to take a whole of school approach to build on practices that promote and support healthy food and drink choices.

A whole of school approach requires strong leadership at all levels of the education and health sectors, and includes responsive healthy food and drink policies, supportive community partnerships, and quality teaching and learning in the school community. These good practices are interrelated and are integral to achieving a healthy food and drink school culture.

Governments provide a range of resources to support school communities. These include teaching resources, curriculum frameworks and policies for the sale, provision and promotion of food and drinks. Additional resources to support this call to action will complement existing resources by enhancing access to evidence-based resources for teaching and, assessing current practices and priorities. The Student Wellbeing Hub (www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au) is the Australian Government's one-stop-shop for student wellbeing information and resources targeted at students, parents and educators. The Hub has information about healthy eating, food and wellbeing.

Working together

The Health and Education Councils have jointly developed this call to action with support from Catholic and Independent school sectors, primary principals, secondary principals, parents, teachers and health associations.

The Australian governments are committed to working with all members of the community to create a healthier future for our children. Australian Education and Health Ministers look forward to a strong collective effort in our school communities that proudly contribute to community wide action to normalise healthy food and drink choices.