

Fill the menu
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Select carefully
>40%

Off the menu

Ten years of healthy choices in WA school canteens

Principals and their school communities are commended for embracing their role in educating students and their families about healthy eating.

Sushi has replaced sausage rolls in WA school canteens. Ten years on from the introduction of the Department of Education's *Healthy Food and Drink* policy 99% of canteen menus offer mostly 'green' healthy choices.

Background

Schools are an ideal place to introduce, support, and teach children about healthy eating. The WA Department of Education's (DoE) Healthy Food and Drink (HFD) policy applies to all school canteens and food services, classroom rewards and cooking activities, school camps, excursions and school-based fundraising activities in public schools, including Independent Public Schools.

The HFD policy is based on:

- [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#); Australian Guide to Healthy Eating
- A whole school approach; Health Promoting Schools Framework
- [Traffic light system](#) of categorising food and drink as green, amber or red.

Principals' survey

The mandatory policy includes five areas of [compliance](#). As part of DoE schools reporting systems, an annual HFD compliance survey is conducted. The 2017* results show:

Area of compliance	
Written policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most schools (69%) have a HFD Policy or in the process of developing a Policy (21%)
Canteen menus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99% reported they met the minimum requirement of 60% of food and drink on offer being classified as 'green'
Promoting healthy eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98% of schools conduct one or more activities e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80% conduct programs such as Crunch & Sip or a school kitchen garden - 54% have adopted the Health Promoting Schools framework - 49% include nutrition information in the school newsletter
Traffic light training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of canteen staff and 78% of P&C representatives completed training
FoodSafe training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 93% of canteen staff and 77% of canteen volunteers completed training
Key differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary schools more likely than secondary schools to meet all areas of compliance • Metropolitan schools had more representatives who had completed traffic light training compared to regional schools.

*A total of 422 (50.1%) principals completed the survey representing 58% metropolitan schools; 42% regional schools; and 74% primary schools; 26% secondary schools.



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Recommendations

The Principals' survey is an important means of assessing HFD policy implementation and identifying, as in the most recent survey, where there is need to maintain services to schools (for example, education and training on the policy) or to intensify or extend services to schools requiring greater practical support with implementation of the policy (for example, secondary and regional schools).

What's next?

The Western Australian School Canteen Association Inc. (WASCA) has been contracted since 2006 to deliver the HFD Project by providing support, advice, training and resources to assist schools to implement the HFD policy. Activities include:

- Advisory service including menu, product and recipe assessments
- Comprehensive website with tools and resources, for example:
 - HFD compliance checklists for [canteens](#), [principals](#), [teachers](#) and [P&C's](#)
 - Sample canteen policy [template](#)
- [Training](#) including Traffic light training; financial management; food safety and hygiene; network meetings and various other events
- Kindy orientation support including presentation and/or resources for parents.

Recognition

Schools across WA are doing amazing things to promote healthy eating. [‘HARVEST: Bright ideas from the field’](#) are online case studies that aim to motivate and inspire schools and their canteens to provide and promote healthy choices. WASCA works with schools to write their story including canteen staff, teachers and P&C representatives. If you are interested in promoting your school, please contact [WASCA](#). See also the [eHarvest video](#) featuring Churchlands Primary School and tips for success from Canteen Supervisor Anna Prosper.

Further HFD facts

In 2016, WASCA in partnership with Curtin University conducted an independent evaluation of the HFD policy implementation. To find out more, see the infographic on the [WASCA website](#)