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## Over a decade 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. Schools continue to support a whole school approach to health and wellbeing by complying with the Department of Education’s *Healthy Food and Drink* policy. Almost all schools (97%) reported canteen menus offer mostly ‘Green’ healthy choices.

### Background

Schools are an ideal place to introduce, support, and teach children about healthy eating. The Western Australian Department of Education’s (DoE) *Healthy Food and Drink* (HFD) policy, applies to all school canteens, 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 online HFD compliance survey is conducted. The 2018\* results show:

Area of compliance	
Written policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most schools (66%) have a HFD Policy or in the process of developing a Policy (17%)</li> </ul>
Canteen menus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 97% reported they met the minimum requirement of &gt;60% of food and drink on offer being classified as ‘green’ with no significant difference between primary, high and other schools</li> </ul>
Promoting healthy eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most popular strategy to promote healthy eating in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primary schools was running healthy eating programs such as, Crunch&amp;Sip® and school kitchen gardens (81%)</li> <li>• secondary schools was to work with the school canteen to adopt the Health Promoting Schools framework (86%)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Healthy P&amp;C fundraising was also adopted by 43% of all schools</li> <li>• Less than 1% of schools claimed that promoting health eating was not a priority</li> </ul>
Traffic light training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 92% of canteen staff and 84% of P&amp;C representatives completed training</li> </ul>
FoodSafe training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 97% of canteen staff and 83% of canteen volunteers completed training</li> </ul>
Key differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metropolitan schools had more canteen supervisors who had completed Traffic light training (97%) compared to regional schools (84%)</li> <li>• Secondary schools were more likely to have red items on the canteen menu even on an occasional basis (45%, n=60) compared to primary schools (20%, n=39)</li> <li>• There were no significant differences in reported menu compliance between metropolitan and regional schools</li> </ul>

\*A total of 461 (57.3%) schools completed the survey representing 60% metropolitan schools; 40% regional schools; and 73% primary schools; 27% secondary schools (including other schools and district high 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. WASCA is funded by the Department of Health (DoH) to implement HFD activities including:

- 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 [video presentation](#), face to face presentation and/or support resources for parents and kindy classrooms
- Canteen consultancy service to review operations, financial management and menus (conditions apply).

### 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](#)

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