

GUIDELINES

SCHOOL NUTRITION AND HEALTHY EATING

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This document should be read in conjunction with [School Nutrition and Healthy Eating policy](#).

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to improve access to healthy food and drink choices in Northern Territory schools, the department requires all schools to use the food categories in the *National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines* (NHSCG) when providing any food or drinks to students. DoE acknowledges the complexities behind providing nutritious food and drinks to students; however, in the interest of the current and future health of our students, all efforts must be made to ensure compliance with these guidelines. Food and drinks are classified according to the amount of nutrients they provide and are based on the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* and nutrient criteria from NHSCG and the Federation of Canteens in Schools.

School canteens, vending machines, nutrition education, fundraising, excursions, school sport events, school nutrition programs, classrooms (including classroom rewards), preschools, early childhood services, breakfast programs, afterschool programs and outside of school hours care services involving food and drinks must comply with the food and drink categories.

While all schools are encouraged to provide **GREEN - ALWAYS ON THE MENU** choices in all school settings, there are some situations that are exempt ([Attachment A refers](#)). All exemptions may still provide an opportunity to provide healthy eating options, and schools are encouraged to provide **GREEN - ALWAYS ON THE MENU** foods wherever possible.

All staff are encouraged to play an active role in supporting healthy eating and nutrition in schools by ensuring all foods and drinks provided at school are consistent with these guidelines, and by actively role modelling and promoting healthy eating and good nutrition.

DEFINITIONS

Afterschool programs are programs such as homework centres and sporting programs which are coordinated by a school or an external service provider on school grounds.

Classroom rewards are incentives provided to whole classes or individual students as a form of positive reinforcement.

Dietary requirements refers to a child's allergy, cultural, religious or medical condition that requires special consideration in planning and providing food and beverages.

Excursion means an educational, sporting or cultural trip by students within or outside the Northern Territory, under the direction of teachers and activity leaders authorised by the department.

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Exemptions are activities where schools have discretion about the foods that they provide to students. These activities may involve the supply of **RED – NOT ON THE MENU** foods; however, schools are encouraged to provide **GREEN – ALWAYS ON THE MENU** foods wherever possible.

Fundraising is an activity that staff, students or the school community co-ordinate inside or outside school hours to raise funds for the school.

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.¹

Food and Nutrition is a focus area of the *Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education* for all year levels from Transition to Year 10 which addresses the role food and nutrition play in enhancing health and wellbeing. The learning outcomes support students to develop knowledge, understanding and skills to make healthy, informed food choices and to explore the contextual factors that influence eating habits and food choices.

Outside of School Hours Care (OSHC) services are provided for pre and school-age children outside of school hours and are coordinated by the school, school council or operated by external service provider on school grounds.

School canteen is the facility that provides food and drinks to students and staff. This includes traditional school canteens in urban settings, rural and remote provision of breakfast, snacks, lunches, and private providers supplying food and drink to school students.

School sport event is any sporting event that staff, School Sport Coordinators, School Sport NT or the school community co-ordinate inside or outside school hours.

School nutrition and breakfast programs are breakfast and/or lunch services for students which support improved attendance and contribute to learning and engagement in education.

Whole school events include those instances where a suspension of normal school activities / classes occurs for celebratory or commemorative purposes and involve all students and the broader school community. Examples include a school fete or disco.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principals are responsible for ensuring:

- all efforts are made for catering and food supplies contracted through the school to be consistent with the policy and guidelines
- all student centred fundraising activities are consistent with the policy and guidelines
- all members of the school community, including school representative bodies and canteen managers, are made aware of, are familiar with, and comply with related aspects of this policy and guidelines
- the school canteen is appropriately registered by the Department of Health as a food business in accordance with the *Food Act*
- canteen staff are encouraged to participate in training provided by the Department of Health to ensure awareness of current information
- parents are provided with regular updates and support materials via school newsletters or websites in order to better support students food and drinks choices at home
- Food and Nutrition is taught to students from Transition to Year 10 as part of the Australian Curriculum through the Health and Physical Education learning area

¹ Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

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- the preschool and outside of school hours care service is compliant with regulatory requirements under the Act and Regulations by implementing the required procedures
- children with specific dietary and health requirements, as indicated in their enrolment form and/or medical management plan, are managed and catered for.

School Representative Bodies (School Councils or Independent Public School Boards) are responsible for ensuring:

- all efforts are made for catering and food supplies contracted by the school to be compliant with the policy and guidelines
- any fundraising or events where food is sold comply with the *Food Act*
- an outside of school hours care service is compliant with regulatory requirements under the Act and Regulations by implementing the required procedures.

Canteen Managers are responsible for ensuring:

- all efforts are made by canteen staff to meet the requirements of the policy and associated guidelines
- canteen menus actively promote the sale / provision of **GREEN- ALWAYS ON THE MENU** food and drinks
- that their knowledge is current and are strongly encouraged to participate in training provided by the Department of Health.

Teachers and educators are responsible for ensuring:

- Food and Nutrition is taught to students from Transition to Year 10, and general nutritional advice and guidance is provided to all students
- education related activities involving food comply with the policy, including camps, excursions or sporting events
- food or drinks are not used as a reward in the classroom or school setting (regardless of category).

Preschools, early childhood services, breakfast programs, afterschool programs and outside of school hours care (OSHC) services are responsible for:

- ensuring children have access to safe drinking water at all times, and are regularly offered food and drinks throughout the day
- ensuring the healthy, hygienic and safe handling, preparation and storing of food and drinks, including those provided by families
- ensuring food is not used as a reward (regardless of category)
- ensuring children with specific dietary and health requirements, as indicated in their enrolment form and/or medical management plan, are managed and catered for
- ensuring the preschool and OSHC service complies with regulatory requirements under the Act and Regulations and departmental policy and guidelines.

**-an OSHC service run by an external provider such as a school council is required to have policies/guidelines in place regarding nutrition for students in their care.*

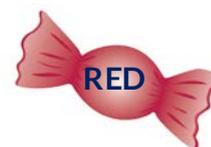
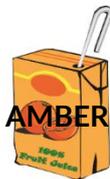
Parents are encouraged to:

- provide healthy food and drinks to their children for consumption at school
- inform the school if their child has any specific dietary requirements or food allergies.

3. GUIDELINES

3.1 Understanding and using healthy food and drink categories in NT schools

The food and drink categories outlined below are the types of food and drinks that can/cannot be provided in schools.



ALWAYS ON THE MENU

SELECT CAREFULLY

NOT ON THE MENU

GREEN - ALWAYS ON THE MENU

A large variety of these foods and drinks **must** be available every day and be the main choices on canteen menus or instances where schools provide food or drink.

Food	Examples
Drinks	<p>Low or reduced-fat milk and soy drinks, plain and flavoured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May contain intense (artificial) sweeteners. • Suggested 375ml serve size or less. • Plant-based milks e.g. almond, must be calcium fortified. <p>Water: plain (tap, spring, mineral or sparkling), with nothing added.</p>
Bread and alternatives	<p>Bagels, wrap style breads, crumpets, English muffins, focaccia, gluten-free, lavash, Lebanese, multigrain, pita, rye, tortillas, Turkish, wholegrain, wholemeal, white high fibre.</p> <p>Raisin and fruit bread, un-iced fruit buns, glazed hot cross fruit buns.</p> <p>Plain and savoury scones, pikelets and pancakes.</p>
Breakfast cereals	<p>Wholegrain, whole-wheat flakes, wholegrain puffed cereals, porridge, whole-wheat biscuits and without added confectionary. Must meet nutrient criteria.</p>
Rice, grains and pasta	<p>Plain rice, noodles, pasta, burghul, cracked wheat, polenta, couscous.</p> <p>Plain air-popped popcorn with nothing added.</p>
Yoghurt, custard and cheese (including soy alternatives)	<p>Low or reduced-fat cheese without added confectionary. Low or reduced-fat plain or fruit yoghurt and custard without added confectionary. Dips that meet nutrient criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May contain intense (artificial) sweeteners.
Fruit	<p>Fresh, in-season is the best choice.</p> <p>Frozen, pureed or canned in natural juice (does not include dried fruit).</p>
Vegetables (including legumes)	<p>Fresh, in-season is the best choice. Frozen or canned without added flavourings.</p> <p>Chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils, baked beans (dried or canned), lentil patties and falafels (grilled or baked). Dips that meet nutrient criteria.</p>
Lean meat, fish, poultry and alternatives	<p>Unprocessed lean beef, chicken, lamb, pork, turkey, fish.</p> <p>Canned tuna, salmon, sardines.</p> <p>Eggs, nuts[#] (un-salted, un-roasted, dry roasted).</p> <p>[#]Check your school policy regarding the use of nuts and products containing nuts.</p>

Water is the preferred option for students in all school settings. All schools and preschools must ensure that children have access to, and are encouraged to access drinking water at all times, particularly in hot weather.

AMBER - SELECT CAREFULLY

These foods and drinks **must** be assessed carefully against the Nutrient Criteria Tables and must not dominate the menu (see pages 7-8 for more details).

Food	Examples
Drinks	<p>Full-fat milk* and soy drinks, plain and flavoured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May contain intense (artificial) sweeteners • Suggested 375ml serve size or less • Coffee-style milk drinks (including flavoured) may only be sold in Middle/Senior Schools (maximum 375ml serve size) • Plant-based milks eg almond, must be calcium fortified. <p>Fruit and vegetable juice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 99% fruit/vegetable juice, including sparkling varieties, no added sugar (maximum 250ml serve size) • Must not contain de-ionised juice <p><i>*For early childhood settings, refer to Exemptions at Attachment A</i></p>
Yoghurt, custard and cheese (including soy alternatives)	<p>Full-fat cheese without added confectionery. Full-fat plain or fruit yoghurt and custard without added confectionery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May contain intense (artificial) sweeteners.
Dried fruit, fruit leathers	All types. Fruit leathers must be 100% fruit. Keep the serve size small (<25g).
Fruit ice blocks, fruit jelly desserts, ice crushes and slushies	<p>At least 99% fruit juice and no added sugar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice slushies and fruit jellies (maximum 200ml serve size) • Fruit ice blocks (maximum 125ml serve size)
Meat products and alternatives	<p>Burgers, patties, strips, balls, nuggets, sausages, frankfurts, saveloys (crumbed and un-crumbed), stews, casseroles and curries.</p> <p>Lean processed luncheon meats, fritz, devon, chicken loaf, free flow chicken, cured meats (for example: ham, bacon). Chicken drumsticks and wings.</p>
Savoury hot food items	Savoury pastries, filled breads, pasta dishes, pizzas, oven-baked potato products, dim sims, spring rolls, rice and noodle dishes.
Sweet and savoury snack foods	<p>Baked snack biscuits, breakfast bars, rice/corn crackers and cakes, crispbreads, fruit filled bars, flavoured popcorn, muesli bars, nut[#] and seed bars, sweet or savoury biscuits.</p> <p><i>#Check your school policy regarding the use of nuts and products containing nuts.</i></p>
Un-iced cakes, muffins and sweet pastries	Some un-iced cakes and muffins that are small in serving size or have been modified to reduce the amount of saturated fat and/or sugar or with added fibre. Only filo or home-made, margarine based pastry can be used in cooking.
Ice creams, milk-based ices and dairy desserts, frozen yoghurts	<p>Low or reduced-fat ice creams (not chocolate-coated), milk-based ices, custards and dairy desserts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk must be listed as the first ingredient
Prepacked smoothies, liquid breakfast, yoghurt drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk must be listed as the first ingredient
Fats and oils	Choose polyunsaturated and monounsaturated oils and spreads and use sparingly (for example: sunflower, safflower, corn, soya bean, olive, canola).
Spreads, dips, relishes	<p>Nut[#] spreads, fish/chicken/meat pastes, yeast spreads, dips, salsa, relishes. Use Sparingly. Choose reduced fat mayonnaise.</p> <p><i>#Check your school policy regarding the use of nuts and products containing nuts.</i></p>
Sauces	<p>Low or reduced-salt tomato sauce, tomato paste, BBQ, soy, satay, gravy and stock. Use sparingly.</p> <p>Mustard and sweet chilli sauce. Use sparingly.</p>
Toppings, syrup, jam, honey	Small amounts, use sparingly.

RED - NOT ON THE MENU

These foods and drinks **must not** be sold or provided in schools, unless part of a whole school event (see pages 7-8 for nutrient criteria to assess foods).

Food	Examples
Drinks	Soft drinks, iced tea, cordial, sports waters, sports drink, flavoured mineral water, energy drinks, sweetened waters.
Intense (artificial) sweeteners*	Any product containing intense (artificial) sweeteners* with the exception of flavoured milk, fruit yoghurts and custards.
Caffeine and guarana	Any products containing guarana. Coffee-style products (including flavoured), mocha, latte, cappuccino or similar. Coffee-style milk drinks over 375mL serve size.
Breakfast cereals	High sugar, high sodium or low fibre varieties that do not meet nutrient criteria.
Fruit/vegetable juice	Less than 99% juice and/or added sugar and/or greater than 250ml serve size and/or contain de-ionised juice.
Jelly desserts, ice crushes and slushies	Less than 99% fruit juice and/or added sugar and/or greater than 200ml serve size.
Icy-poles and fruit ice blocks	Less than 99% fruit juice and/or added sugar and/or greater than 125ml serve size.
Cakes and slices	Iced cakes and slices, doughnuts, Danishes, croissants, cream-filled buns/cakes.
Confectionery	All types: sold separately or added to products including: boiled lollies, carob, chocolate (including choc chips and chocolate-coated), chocolate spreads, cough lollies, 100s and 1000s, juice jellies, icing, liquorice, soft lollies, yoghurt/carob-coated.
Deep fried food	All types.
Sauces and spreads	Full fat mayonnaise. Tomato sauce, tomato paste, BBQ, soy, satay, gravy and stock that is NOT low or reduced-salt.
Pastry	Puff and short-crust pastry.
Fats	Cream, coconut cream, coconut milk, butter, copha, ghee, lard.

*Code number and prescribed name for intense (artificial) sweeteners include:

950 (acesulphame potassium), 951 (aspartame), 952 (calcium cyclamate or sodium cyclamate or cyclamate), 953 (isomalt), 954 (saccharin or calcium saccharin or sodium saccharine or potassium saccharine), 955 (sucralose), 956 (alitame), 957 (thaumatin), 961 (neotame), 965 (maltitol and maltitol syrup or hydrogenated glucose syrup), 966 (lactitol), 967 (xylitol), 968 (erythritol).

Confectionery in school settings

All types of confectionery are categorised as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU** and must not to be sold or provided in schools, unless part of a whole school event.

3.1.1 Understanding Nutrient Criteria Tables for **AMBER - SELECT CAREFULLY** food and drink

If the food item being assessed has **less than or equal** to the numbers specified in the energy, saturated fat or sodium column, and **more than or equal** to the number specified in the fibre column in Nutrient Criteria Tables 1 and 2, it may be sold or provided in the school. These foods and drinks contain some valuable nutrients, moderate amounts of saturated fat and/or sugar and/or sodium (salt) and serve sizes should be kept small to limit the energy (kilojoules) being consumed.

Note the differences for pre-prepared meals based on core foods which can be classified as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU**, **AMBER - SELECT CAREFULLY** or **GREEN- ALWAYS ON THE MENU**.

If the food being assessed is **over** the threshold for energy or saturated fat or sodium or **under** the threshold for fibre (if any criterion is **not** met) –the food is categorised as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU** and **these foods and drinks must not be sold or provided in schools, unless part of a whole school event.**

NUTRIENT CRITERIA - TABLE 1			
Table 1: Hot food items and processed meats assessed per 100g			
Category	Nutrient Criteria		
	Energy (kJ) per 100g	Saturated fat (g) per 100g	Sodium (mg) per 100g
Savoury pastries, filled breads, pizzas, oven-baked potato products, dim sims, spring rolls	1000kJ or less	5g or less	400mg or less
Meat products and alternatives crumbed and not-crumbed (burgers, patties, strips, balls or nuggets), sausages, frankfurts and saveloys	1000kJ or less	5g or less	450mg or less
Processed luncheon meats (fritz, devon, chicken loaf, free flow chicken products) and cured meats (for example: ham, bacon)	1000kJ or less	3g or less	750mg or less
Pre-prepared meals based on core foods including rice and noodle dishes, sushi, pasta dishes, stews, casseroles and curries	greater than 1000kJ	greater than 5g or less	greater than 400mg
	1000kJ or less	5g or less	400mg or less
	750kJ or less	3.5g or less	300mg or less

NUTRIENT CRITERIA - TABLE 2				
Table 2: Snack food items assessed per serve				
Category	Nutrient Criteria			
	Energy (kJ) per serve	Saturated fat (g) per serve	Sodium (mg) per serve	Fibre (g) per serve
Sweet snack food, bars and biscuits	600kJ or less	3g or less	-	1g or more
Savoury snack food, biscuits, crisp breads and crisps	600kJ or less	2g or less	200mg or less	-
	Energy must be 1800kJ or less per 100g			
Snack packs, dip and biscuit packs, cheese and biscuit packs	500kJ or less	5g or less	300mg or less	-
Dairy based ice creams, frozen yoghurt, dairy dessert	600kJ or less	3g or less	-	-
	Milk must be listed as first ingredient			
Prepacked smoothies, liquid breakfast and yoghurt drinks	900kJ or less	3g or less		
	Milk must be listed as first ingredient			
Un-iced cakes, muffins and sweet pastries	900kJ or less	3g or less	-	1.5g or more

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The following foods can be provided in schools however Nutrient Criteria in Table 3 help to make the healthier choice. If the food being assessed has **less than or equal** to the numbers specified in the saturated fat or sodium column, it is **GREEN- ALWAYS ON THE MENU**. If it is over either of the thresholds, it is **AMBER - SELECT CAREFULLY**.

NUTRIENT CRITERIA - TABLE 3		
Table 3: Sauces, dips and soups assessed per 100g		
Category	Nutrient Criteria	
	Saturated fat (g) per 100g	Sodium (mg) per 100g
Pasta sauces and simmer sauces	2g or less	300mg or less
Dips (legume, dairy, vegetable or salsa)	2g or less	750mg or less
Soups as prepared ready-to-eat (condensed, instant)	2g or less	300mg or less

If the breakfast cereal being assessed has **less than or equal** to the numbers specified in the sugar, saturated fat or sodium column, and **more than or equal** to the number specified in the fibre column, it is **GREEN- ALWAYS ON THE MENU**. If any criterion is **not** met –the cereal is categorised as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU**.

NUTRIENT CRITERIA - TABLE 4			
Table 4: Breakfast cereals assessed per 100g			
Nutrient Criteria			
Sugar (g) per 100g	Fibre (g) per 100g	Saturated fat (g) per 100g	Sodium (mg) per 100g
Cereal without added fruit, 20g or less	5g or more	2g or less	600mg or less
Cereal with added fruit, 25g or less			

National Healthy Schools Canteen Project (2010), National Healthy Schools Canteen Trainer's Manual, Australian Government Department of Health and Federation of Canteens in Schools Nutrient Criteria Effective 1 July 2017.

For home or canteen-made meals refer to the supporting document 'Ground rules for assessing mixed meals or foods without nutrition information panels'.

3.2 School based activities

The following advice provides specific guidance to support schools when planning school based activities, including activities outside of normal daily operations.

3.2.1 Fundraising

Student centred fundraising activities undertaken during the year must comply with food and drink categories. Any food or drinks categorised as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU** must not be used in fundraising, with the exception of whole school events e.g. sold at a school fete, carnival or disco.

3.2.2 Excursions (including school camps)

All excursions, including camps, must comply with food and drink categories. The **GREEN - ALWAYS ON THE MENU** category must be available (including all days on which the camp is scheduled) and be the main choice on the selection of foods provided to students. Any food or drinks categorised as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU** must not be sold or provided to students.

3.2.3 School sport events

All school sport events must comply with food and drink categories. A large variety of food and drinks from the **GREEN - ALWAYS ON THE MENU** category must be always be available as the main choice for students. Any food or drinks categorised as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU** must not be sold or provided to students, unless part of a special whole school event.

3.2.4 School Nutrition and breakfast programs

All school nutrition and breakfast programs must comply with food and drink categories. A large variety of food and drinks from the **GREEN - ALWAYS ON THE MENU** category must be available every day and be the main choices on the menu. Any food or drinks categorised as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU** must not be sold or provided to students.

3.2.5 Outside of school hours care (OSHC) services

All OSHC services which are coordinated by the school or operated by outside providers on school grounds must comply with the food and drink categories. Food and drinks from the **GREEN - ALWAYS ON THE MENU** category must be available every day and be the main choice on the menu. Any food or drinks categorised as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU** must not be sold or provided to students.

3.2.6 Food Rewards

Food **must not** be used as a reward.

Sweet foods that are high in energy (kilojoules) particularly appeal to children and are frequently used as a tool to change children's behaviour. This practice can have negative consequences on students. Research shows that when children eat nutritious foods, they perform better at school and learn more effectively. Children should be given consistent messages about food from all adults. It is still important to reward children for positive behaviour and this can be done using non-food rewards.

3.2.7 Afterschool programs

All afterschool programs which are coordinated by the school or operated by outside providers on school grounds must comply with the food and drink categories. Food and drinks from the **GREEN - ALWAYS ON THE MENU** category must be available every day and be the main choice on the menu. Any food or drinks categorised as **RED - NOT ON THE MENU** must not be sold or provided to students.

3.3 Food allergies and intolerances

Any food or drink provided in schools must have regard to the medical needs of all students. Schools are required to implement school based processes to ensure students at risk of anaphylaxis are safe (the [Students at risk of anaphylaxis policy](#) refers).

3.4 Resources for schools

In order to assist schools to successfully integrate the policy and guidelines, a range of resources have been developed that creatively introduce healthy food and drink choices into a range of early childhood and school activities and situations. These resources are available via the Department of Education [website](#).

3.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ⁱ National Healthy Schools Canteen Project (2010), National Healthy Schools Canteen Trainer's Manual, Australian Government Department of Health and Federation of Canteens in Schools Nutrient Criteria Effective 1 July 2017.

ⁱⁱ Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

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Food and Drink Categories and Nutrient Criteria Tables reflect the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines and supporting materials

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-nutrition-canteens>

SCHOOL NUTRITION AND HEALTHY EATING - POLICY EXEMPTIONS

Exemption	Details
Food and drinks supplied from home	This can include birthday cakes. Schools can actively encourage the provision of healthy food/drink by parents, such as whole grain muffins.
Special whole school events	This can include a school fete, carnival or disco. Schools should ensure that students are provided with a range of GREEN foods at whole school events, in addition to any RED food choice.
Preschool and early childhood settings	Full fat dairy products are recommended for children aged birth to two years so these products are classified as GREEN for this age group. Reduced fat dairy products are suitable for children aged over two years so full fat dairy products are classified as AMBER for children over two years.
Middle Schools	Food Technologies classes*
Senior School	Food and Hospitality classes*
	Senior School only campuses (yrs. 10-12), in consultation with their School Councils, students, canteens and staff determine whether to comply with the policy in their respective school setting.*
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	Hospitality courses*
Staff vending machines / fridges	School staff are encouraged to support the policy by not consuming RED foods / drinks in front of students

*Although these activities are exempt, schools are encouraged to provide and use **GREEN** foods and drinks wherever possible.