

# School nutrition and healthy eating – policy

# Contents

<b>1. Acknowledgement</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Policy summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Business need</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>4. Scope</b> .....	<b>4</b>
4.1. Food and drink categories .....	4
4.2. School nutrition and healthy eating exemptions .....	5
<b>5. Definitions</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>6. Related documents, legislation, guidelines, resources and references</b> .....	<b>7</b>
6.1. Supporting documents .....	7
6.2. Legislation .....	7
6.3. Guidelines .....	7
6.4. Resources .....	7
6.5. References .....	8

Read this document with the School nutrition and healthy eating guidelines.

## 1. Acknowledgement

The Department of Education acknowledges the cooperation and contributions of the Northern Territory Department of Health, particularly in regard to expert nutrition information and resources.

## 2. Policy summary

The Department of Education (department) is committed to ensuring that students in school settings have access to healthy food and drinks and nutrition education to help inform their decision making in the future. Improving access to healthy food and drinks and physical activities is linked to healthier students who can achieve better learning outcomes<sup>1</sup>. 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 this policy and its associated guidelines
- actively role modelling healthy eating behaviours
- promoting healthy eating and good nutrition in the classroom and with families.

When food or drink is provided to students in a school, by the canteen, or during any other activity or program, schools must meet the requirements of this policy and guidelines which are based on nutrient criteria from the National healthy school canteen guidelines, the Federation of canteens in schools and the Australian guide to healthy eating.

The department 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 this policy.

## 3. Business need

Schools have an opportunity to foster healthy eating habits by aligning the curriculum, nutritional recommendations and food provision<sup>2</sup>. This policy has been developed to ensure all students have access to healthy foods and drinks and a consistent approach to the availability and sale of food and drinks in Northern Territory government schools.

Data published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicates that in 2014-2015 the percentage of overweight or obese children in Australia was 25%<sup>3</sup>. Factors which may contribute to childhood obesity and weight issues can include poor food choices, lack of physical activity, limited access to and knowledge about healthy food and drink options. Poor food and drink choices affect a number of other childhood health issues including oral health and dental care. In 2010, 55% of 6 year old's had experienced decay in their baby teeth, deciduous teeth in biological terms, and 48% of 12 year old's had experienced decay in their permanent teeth<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention – Division of Population Health. *Health and Academic Achievement*. May 2014 - <https://www.cdc.gov/about/organization/cio-orgcharts/nccdp.php.html>

<sup>2</sup> Lawlis, T, Knox, M and Jamieson, M. Dietitians Association of Australia. 2016. *School Canteens: A systematic review of the policy, perceptions and use from an Australian Perspective*. 73:389-398 10.1111/1747-0080.12279.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Overview. 2015 - <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-statistics/behaviours-risk-factors/overweight-obesity/overview>

<sup>4</sup> University of Adelaide. 2015 *Oral health and dental care in Australia: facts and figures 2015*. DEN 229. Accessed on 28 October 2016 at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129554609>

The early years are also an important time for establishing lifelong healthy eating habits. Under the *Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011* and *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (NSW)* preschools, Families as First Teachers programs and school based outside of school hours care services must ensure:

- children have access to safe drinking water at all times and are regularly offered nutritious food and beverages throughout the day
- the service implements healthy, hygienic and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, including food and beverages provided by the family and
- the food or beverages provided are nutritious, adequate in quantity and caters for each individual child's dietary requirements.

## 4. Scope

This policy and associated guidelines apply to all Northern Territory government schools and includes:

- vending machines
- school canteens
- nutrition education
- fundraising
- excursions
- school sport events
- school nutrition programs
- classrooms including classroom rewards
- breakfast programs.

### 4.1. Food and drink categories

Where food or drinks are provided by the department, there must be compliance with the food and drink categories except where an exemption may apply.

Category	Guide	Description
Green	Always on the menu	These foods and drinks are the best choices for a healthy school canteen and during school activities. A large variety of these foods and drinks must be available every day and represent the main choices on the canteen menu or when provided at school. They have a wide range of nutrients and are generally low in saturated fat, sugar or sodium salt.
Amber	Select carefully	These foods and drinks contain some valuable nutrients, moderate amounts of saturated fat, sugar or sodium salt and if eaten regularly or in large amounts, may contribute to excess energy, kilojoules, being consumed. These foods and drinks must be assessed carefully against the nutrient criteria tables in the National healthy school canteen guidelines to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the healthiest choices from this category are selected</li> <li>• these foods and drinks must not dominate the menu</li> <li>• the serving size is small.</li> </ul>

<b>Red</b>	Not on the menu	These foods and drinks must not be sold or provided in schools unless part of a whole school event. These foods and drinks may contain excess energy, measured by kilojoules, saturated fat, sodium salt, sugar and are low in nutritional value.
------------	-----------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Information to assist schools to use the food and drink categories, including the classification of specific items, is contained in the School nutrition and healthy eating guidelines.

## 4.2. School nutrition and healthy eating exemptions

The following exemptions apply in this policy.

Exemption	Description
Food and drinks supplied from home	This can include birthday cakes. Schools can actively encourage the provision of healthy food or drink by parents, such as whole grain muffins.
Whole school events	This can include a school fete, carnival or disco, however does not include fundraising activities. Schools should ensure that students are provided with a range of green - always on the menu foods in addition to any red - not on the menu food choices.
Preschool and early childhood settings	Full fat dairy products are recommended for children aged birth to two years, these products are classified as green – always on the menu, for this age group.  Reduced fat dairy products are suitable for children aged over two years, full fat dairy products are classified as amber - select carefully, for children over two years.
Middle schools	Food technologies classes. *
Senior school	Food and hospitality classes. *  Senior school only campuses, years 10 to 12, in consultation with their school representative bodies, 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 and fridges	School staff are encouraged to support the policy by not consuming red - not on the menu foods and drinks in front of students.

\*Although these activities are exempt, schools are encouraged to provide and use green – always on the menu foods and drinks wherever possible.

\*An outside of school hours care service or afterschool program run by an external provider, which includes school representative bodies registered as providers is required to have policies or guidelines in place regarding nutrition for students in their care in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (NSW).

## 5. Definitions

Term	Definition
Afterschool programs	Programs such as homework centres and sporting programs which are coordinated by a school or an external service provider such as a school representative body on school grounds.
Classroom rewards	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	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.
Fundraising	An activity that staff, students or the school community coordinate inside or outside school hours to raise funds for the school.
Health	A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, according to World Health Organisation, 1946 <sup>5</sup> .
Outside of School Hours Care services (OSHC)	Provided for pre and school age children outside of school hours which are coordinated by the school, school representative body or operated by an external service provider on school grounds.
School canteen	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 representative bodies	An incorporated body under the Education Act 2015 and includes independent public school boards, school councils and joint school representative bodies.
School nutrition and breakfast programs	Breakfast or lunch services for students which support improved attendance and contribute to learning and engagement in education.
School sport event	Any sporting event that staff, school sport coordinators, School Sport NT or the school community coordinate inside or outside school hours.
Whole school events	Instances where a suspension of normal school activities or classes occur for celebration or commemorative purposes and involve all students and the broader school community, for example a school fete or disco.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

## 6. Related documents, legislation, guidelines, resources and references

### 6.1. Supporting documents

The following supporting documents can be located on the School nutrition and healthy eating page – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/school-nutrition-and-healthy-eating>

- Creating a healthier canteen menu information sheet
- Food and drink categories information sheet
- Healthy alternative to sausage sizzles information sheet
- Ideas for fundraising information sheet
- Ideas for healthy food based fundraising information sheet
- Newsletter inserts for healthy eating information sheet
- Recipe checklist for canteen managers and teachers information sheet
- School camp and barbeque catering ideas information sheet
- Sporting events, fundraising and non-food reward ideas information sheet
- Suitable foods and drinks in school information sheet
- Tips for parents to promote healthy eating information sheet

### 6.2. Legislation

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (NSW) - <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2011-0653>
- *Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011* - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EDUCATION-AND-CARE-SERVICES-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>

### 6.3. Guidelines

- National healthy school canteen guidelines - <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-healthy-school-canteens-guidelines-for-healthy-foods-and-drinks-supplied-in-school-canteens>
- School nutrition and healthy eating guidelines - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/school-nutrition-and-healthy-eating>

### 6.4. Resources

- Australian guide to healthy eating - <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-guide-healthy-eating>
- Families as First Teachers programs - <https://education.nt.gov.au/support-for-teachers/faft>
- Federation of canteens in schools - <https://www.focis.com.au/>

## 6.5. References

- National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention – Division of Population Health. *Health and Academic Achievement*. May 2014 - <https://www.cdc.gov/about/organization/cio-orgcharts/nccdphp.html>
- Lawlis, T, Knox, M and Jamieson, M. Dietitians Association of Australia. 2016. *School Canteens: A systematic review of the policy, perceptions and use from an Australian Perspective*. 73:389-398 10.1111/1747-0080.12279 - <https://researchprofiles.canberra.edu.au/en/publications/school-canteens-a-systematic-review-of-the-policy-perceptions-and>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Overview. 2015 - <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-statistics/behaviours-risk-factors/overweight-obesity/overview>
- University of Adelaide. 2015 *Oral health and dental care in Australia: facts and figures 2015*. DEN 229. Accessed on 28 October 2016 - <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dental-oral-health/oral-health-and-dental-care-in-australia/contents/introduction>
- World Health Organisation (1946) 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 - <https://www.scirp.org/index.aspx>



Acronyms	Full form
OSHC	Outside of School Hours Care services
VET	Vocational Education and Training

<b>Document title</b>	School nutrition and healthy eating – policy
<b>Contact details</b>	Inclusion and Engagement Services, Inclusion, Wellbeing Programs and Services <a href="mailto:swipolicy.doe@education.nt.gov.au">swipolicy.doe@education.nt.gov.au</a>
<b>Approved by</b>	Executive Director Inclusion and Engagement Services
<b>Date approved</b>	18 September 2023
<b>TRM number</b>	50:D22:108946

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1	July 2009	Student Services Division	First version
2	October 2011	Student Services Division	Updated to reflect National healthy school canteen guidelines
3	July 2013	School Support Services	File 2017/545; EDOC: 2017/32452
4	October 2017	Student Wellbeing and Inclusion	File 2018/3857; EDOC: 2018/96643
5	September 2023	Inclusion, Wellbeing Programs and Services	Administrative amendments made to align roles and responsibilities to the structural alignment in effect from 1 July 2022 including NTG template and minor formatting