

Healthy Food in Queensland Schools Alliance

Statement of Intent 2022



Healthy eating helps children and young people stay alert, concentrate, and learn better in the classroom, while protecting against infections and the development of chronic diseases in later life.

Schools play an essential role in promoting health, and a healthy food and drink environment is fundamental to this. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has impacted countless aspects of daily life, including health behaviours. Reports show an increase in the consumption of junk and snack foods, increased screen time, and weight gain for many. As we recover from the turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has never been a more vital time for our schools to be places of health and wellbeing for our children, supporting families in their efforts to promote health and wellbeing in the home environment.

In recognition of the importance of the school environment in enabling healthy food and drink choices, in 2019 the **Good Practice Guide*** was endorsed for release by Education and Health Ministers nationally. A **Joint Statement*** was also developed with support from Catholic and Independent school sectors, primary principals, secondary principals, parents, teachers and health associations. More recently, the [National Obesity Strategy](#) recommends whole-of-school policies and practices to support healthy behaviours and skills – for example healthy school canteen menus. Schools are acknowledged as a Prevention Partner within the [National Preventive Health Strategy](#).

The [Smart Choices - Healthy food and drink supply Strategy for Queensland Schools \(Smart Choices\)](#) is a whole of school healthy food supply policy based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines. It is mandatory in Queensland state schools, and strongly encouraged in non-state schools. This policy positions schools to deliver on their potential in contributing to prevention of obesity and chronic disease. Evidence consistently shows that multi-strategy interventions targeting the key elements of healthy school food supply policies improve implementation. Further, children can and will make healthier food choices at school when those choices are made available and promoted.

The **Healthy Food in Schools Alliance** wants to see a more comprehensive and integrated effort to improve the implementation of Smart Choices in Queensland schools, and better monitoring in state schools. This will ensure more healthy food and drinks choices are offered to all Queensland children regardless of where they live and which school they attend. Less unhealthy foods and drinks will be promoted, sold and provided, and Queensland children will be healthier.

Goals of the Healthy Food in Schools Alliance (2022)

- Increased leadership awareness and support of Smart Choices as a Department of Education policy that protects the health of students, being a mandatory policy for Queensland state schools, and strongly encouraged in non-state schools.
- Increased communication to parents regarding the importance of a healthy food and drink environment in schools to support the health of children.
- More accountability for state school principals via enhanced reporting against Smart Choices implementation, including an independent bi-annual review of school tuckshop menus.
- Increased capacity for organisations that directly support implementation of Smart Choices in schools.
- A commitment to a comprehensive review of Smart Choices in line with the review of the Australian Dietary Guidelines, including investigation of implementation barriers and enablers.

*available on request