



Department of  
Education  
and Training

# POLICY AND STANDARDS FOR HEALTHY FOOD AND DRINK CHOICES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Information for schools

### From the Minister

Childhood obesity is now recognised as a worldwide epidemic which must be addressed as a priority. Many parts of our community are playing an active role in reducing childhood obesity and schools can—and indeed must—play a vital role.

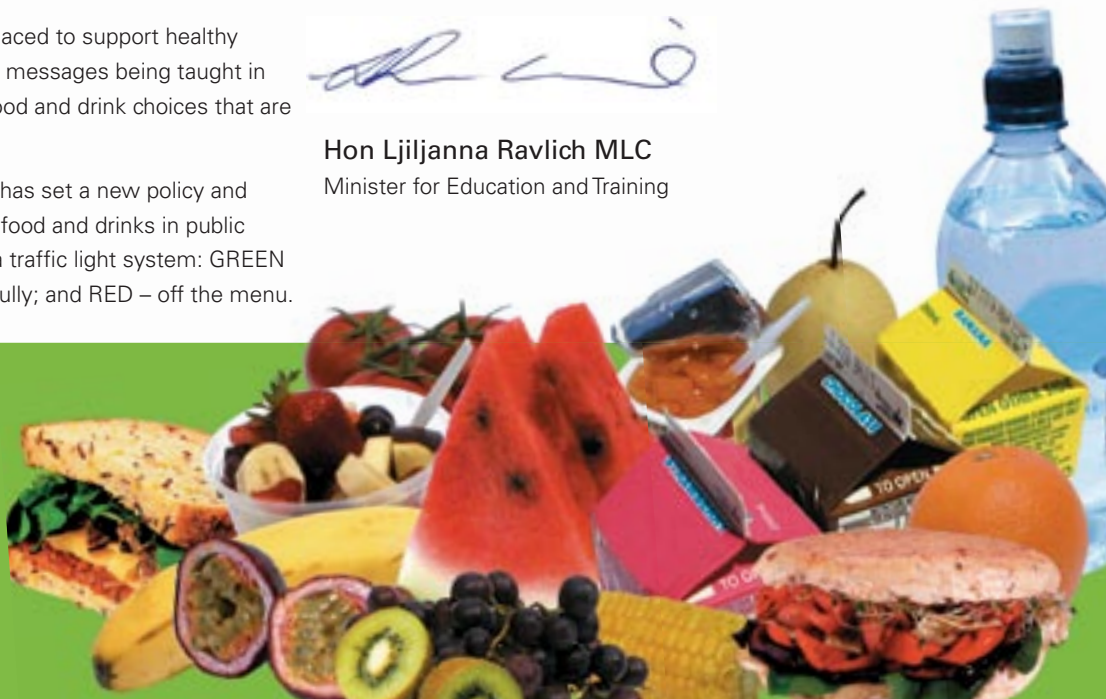
Schools and their canteens are well placed to support healthy eating. They should reinforce nutrition messages being taught in the classroom by modelling healthy food and drink choices that are tasty, interesting and affordable.

To help schools, the WA Government has set a new policy and standards for the provision of healthy food and drinks in public schools. The standards are based on a traffic light system: GREEN – fill the menu; AMBER – select carefully; and RED – off the menu.

Along with the requirement from next year for students in Years 1 to 10 to participate in a minimum of two hours of physical activity each week, this new policy for healthy food and drink choices in schools is another step in ensuring our children are fit and healthy.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich MLC  
Minister for Education and Training

**GREEN**  
Fill the menu



**AMBER**  
Select carefully



**RED**  
Off the menu



## Scope of the policy and standards

The policy applies to all operators of a canteen or tuckshop on public school sites including Parents & Citizens' Associations (P&Cs), external contractors and local caterers/shops that provide food services to schools. The policy is to be implemented by all canteen operators or negotiated as part of new or existing food service contracts.

The policy also applies to all areas in the school where the principal is directly responsible for the supply of food and drinks – for example, classroom rewards, school camps and excursions.

This whole-school approach provides consistent messages through the curriculum, social and physical environments. The relationships between the school, home and the community are key elements of health promotion in schools.

Sometimes food is supplied during classroom or learning activities or as part of school events, for example a school disco or school excursion. Events and activities organised by the school are included in the scope of the policy.

Those activities organised outside of the direct responsibility of the principal are not required to adhere to the policy or standards, for example, fundraising by the P&C and school fetes. However, the principal is required to consult with the school community in deciding the policy for healthy food and drinks.

## Role of the school canteen

The role of the school canteen is to provide a food service to students and staff that meets their nutritional needs, promotes healthy food, is part of a whole-school approach, and is affordable and financially sustainable.

Making a profit is a secondary objective and should be achieved through the sale of healthy foods.

School canteens must reinforce nutrition messages being taught in the classroom by modelling healthy food and drink choices that are tasty, interesting and affordable. They have the potential to influence food choices by students at school and in the wider community, and help students learn to make healthy choices throughout their adult lives.

In other states/territories it has been consistently shown that healthy school canteens are profitable.

## A balanced menu

School canteens will support healthy eating by:

- having available every day and promoting a wide range of the foods that should make up the majority of a healthy diet (GREEN)
- having available only sometimes, choosing healthier alternatives and avoiding large serving sizes of foods that should be eaten in moderation (AMBER)
- not making available foods that do not meet specified minimum nutrient criteria (RED).

The traffic light system is easy to follow and will help with menu planning. It will also remind students of the need to select more frequently from the GREEN group of foods and eat in moderation the AMBER foods.

Some categories have a maximum portion size and/or kilojoule allowance per serve. Savoury commercial products in the AMBER group will be limited to those that meet the criteria for registration and will be available no more than twice a week. Judgment needs to be exercised over issues such as serving size.

## Minimum standards

All processed food and drink sold in school canteens must meet a minimum nutrient standard.

The Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia will continue to be used to set minimum nutrient standards for food sold in canteens. All products are measured against criteria for each food type using the national Federation of Canteens in Schools (FOCiS) nutrient criteria to determine if products are able to be registered in the Buyers' Guide. The criteria have recently been reviewed nationally by qualified health professionals, food technologists and food industry representatives.

Registered foods are lower in fat, sugar and salt (and higher in fibre and calcium where relevant) than other products of that food type available in the market. Foods that do not meet the standard are RED foods and processed foods that meet the standards are AMBER.

Canteens are familiar with the registration system and standards. In addition to fresh foods, canteens are able to access healthier versions of manufacturers' products.

## Implementing the policy

The policy will come into effect for the 2007 school year.

All schools will be required to reach at least a minimum level on a rating system which will include criteria such as canteen menu, canteen policy, skills and knowledge, food safety and hygiene and school community involvement. The rating system allows schools to make continuous improvements across levels of achievement.

Schools having difficulty making changes from the beginning of 2007 will have ongoing support from the Western Australian School Canteen Association and the Department.

By gradually introducing changes in the first half of 2007, less healthy food items can be removed and replaced with healthier alternatives of the same food type. This acknowledges that menu changes involve planning and management of existing stock to limit wastage and provides time for the food industry to develop or re-formulate products.

## Reporting on progress

Schools are to demonstrate compliance through the principal when required by district directors, and report annually to parents via the school newsletter.

The school review process monitors schools' compliance on a range of matters. Under this process, school principals report to district directors on school performance and policy implementation.

Through the school review process, schools will need to demonstrate they have a nutritional policy for their school canteens and they have reached the minimum standard on the canteen rating system. The criteria in the rating system provide a means for easily demonstrating system compliance and in reporting to parents.

## Support and assistance for canteens

Canteens will be provided with support and assistance through:

- continued funding to support school canteens through training and mentoring for canteen staff
- increased information to encourage participation, for example through newsletters, the website and/or helplines
- initiation of combined "buying groups"
- information/awareness and education resources for parents, teaching staff and health promotion officers
- coordination with school physical activity strategies and health sector health promotion services.

Resources and strategies will be provided for schools to communicate with their local communities about the benefits of a nutritional policy. Education for parents, students, teachers, principals and canteen staff is essential for a whole-school approach that provides consistent messages about health. The resources will need to link to and support initiatives to increase physical activity in public schools.

System-wide training will be provided for canteen staff to increase knowledge about health and nutrition. Canteens not yet achieving the minimum standards of achievement will be given priority for training.

"Buying groups" will be initiated among school canteens within geographical locations to assist in increasing orders and demand from suppliers for registered healthy alternative products. Buying groups will be of most benefit to schools in rural or regional areas where supply of healthier products can be limited.

## What's on the menu for WA schools

The table below provides examples of GREEN, AMBER and RED foods under the new traffic light system for WA public schools. This is not the entire list of available foods.

Nuts and nut spreads do not appear in the table. Schools are advised to refer to the Department's *School Health Care Policy* and *Anaphylaxis Advice Paper* before deciding whether or not to include nuts and nut spreads on the canteen menu.

GREEN	Examples
<b>Fill the menu</b>	
Breads	A variety of bread types
Cereal foods	Wholegrain cereals, pasta, noodles, rice
Vegetables	Vegetables and salads (reduced fat dressing only), all salad mixtures
Fruit	Fresh, frozen and tinned (in natural juices)
Legumes	Tinned (eg bean mix, kidney beans), cooked
Reduced fat dairy products	Reduced fat: milk (plain and flavoured), yoghurt (fresh, frozen, plain or fruit), cheese
Lean meat, fish, poultry and alternatives	All lean meats, chicken (no skin) or registered meats,* fish (eg tuna, salmon, sardines), and egg
Sandwich fillings	All lean meats, lean chicken, fish, creamed corn/corn kernels, egg, canned spaghetti (reduced salt), salads, baked beans, low fat cheese, hommpos, vegemite, yeast spreads and fish spreads*
Hot food	Jaffles/hot rolls/toasted sandwiches (fillings as for sandwich fillings), baked potatoes, rice, soups, toast, English muffins, crumpets (wholemeal), raisin toast, and meals meeting the criteria for registration such as curry and rice and pasta dishes
Snacks	Yoghurt, scones, raisin or fruit bread, pikelets, cheese sticks, bread sticks, bruschetta, water crackers, rice cakes, rice crackers, popcorn (plain/low fat/flavoured), dried fruit, seed packs, trail mix based on breakfast cereals, registered snacks*
Drinks	Water, reduced fat milk, fresh fruit milkshakes, soy, 100% fruit juice (small size), plain mineral water
AMBER	Examples
<b>Select carefully and limit</b>	
Breakfast cereals	Refined cereals with added sugars
Full fat dairy foods	Milk, yoghurt, custard, low fat dairy desserts and cheese
Savoury commercial products	Registered products such as ovenable fish/chicken/potato portions should be chosen because they are lower in fat/salt*
Snack foods bars	Registered products such as breakfast bars, cereal bars and fruit bars*
Savoury snacks	Registered products such as oven baked vege chips, garlic or herb bread (lightly spread)*
Cakes, muffins and sweet biscuits	Registered products such as cakes, muffins and biscuits (reduced fat and/or sugar and based on wholemeal flour)*
Ice-creams, ice blocks, fruit based icepoles, slushees	Registered ice-creams, milk based ice confectionery, frozen yoghurts and rice cream*
Drinks	Fruit drinks, mineral waters flavoured with fruit juice, low joule cordials
RED	Examples
<b>Off the menu</b>	
Sugar and artificially sweetened drinks	Soft drinks, artificially sweetened soft drinks, energy drinks, cordials, sports drinks and mineral waters flavoured with sugar, high caffeine drinks (eg drinks containing guarana)
Confectionery	All types, caramelised popcorn
Pastry items	All types that do not meet the criteria for registration
Sandwich meats	High fat sandwich meats including polony (devon) and salami
Deep fried foods	All types
Savoury snacks	Crisps, chips and other similar products that do not meet the criteria for registration
Ice-creams	Chocolate coated and premium ice-creams
Sandwich fillings	Honey, jam, chocolate spreads, confectionery sprinkles
Cakes, muffins and sweet pastries	Croissants, doughnuts, cream filled buns/cakes, sweet pastries, slices

\* Meets the criteria for Star Choice registration