



A Better Choice

Healthy Food & Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Health Facilities

Acknowledgements

At the Queensland Obesity Summit in May 2006, the Premier announced \$21 million over the next three years for partnerships, grants, facilities and other resources to promote healthy eating and physical activity including the *A Better Choice – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Health Facilities (A Better Choice)*.

This strategy adapts elements from the Queensland Department of Education, Training, and the Arts and Queensland Department of Health *Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools (2005)*, which was based on the NSW Department of Health and NSW Department of Education and Training *Fresh Tastes@School* NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy (2004) and Canteen Menu Planning Guide.

A Better Choice has been developed through a wide consultation process and overseen by the Healthy Food Choices in Queensland Health Facilities Steering Group, the Nutrient Criteria Working Group and the *A Better Choice* Strategy Steering Group.

Queensland Health wishes to thank and acknowledge the contribution of staff and others who assisted in the development of this strategy; for details please refer to appendix 1.

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Foreword

It is well known that nutrition is vital for good health.

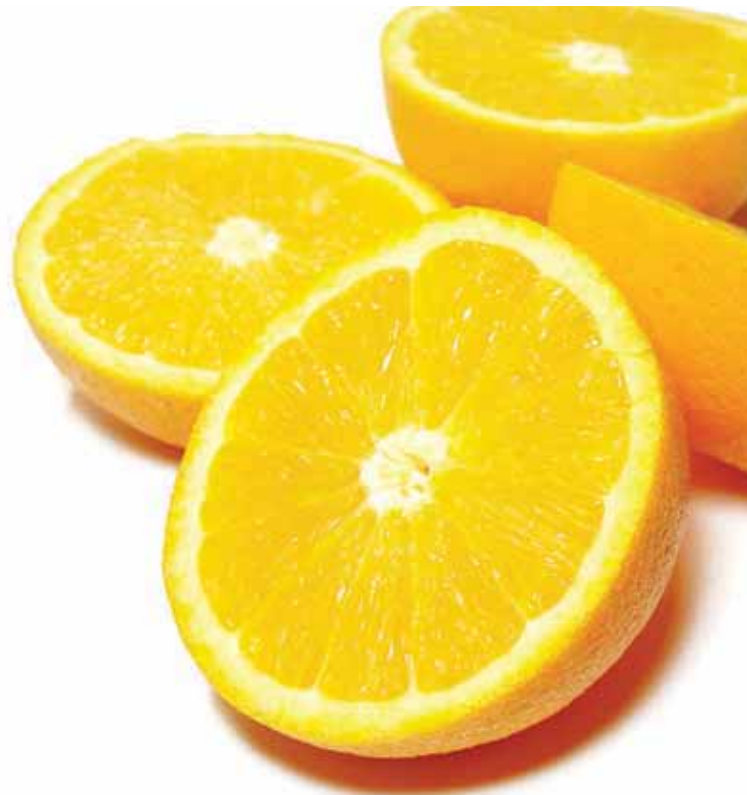
In fact, many of the chronic conditions treated within Queensland Health hospitals could be prevented by improved diet and regular physical activity.

That's why Queensland Health is leading by example to serve up food of high nutritional value to staff and visitors at all Queensland Health facilities.

The Queensland Government's *A Better Choice Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Health Facilities* is just one of the initiatives promoting healthier lifestyles to come out of the 2006 Obesity Summit.

A Better Choice is about creating an environment that makes healthy food choices easier choices by improving the range, availability and promotion of healthy foods and drinks. It will also limit the availability of less healthy options.

This strategy applies to all situations where food or drinks are provided to staff, visitors and the general public in facilities owned and operated by Queensland Health.



By promoting healthier choices in our hospitals, Queensland Health will become a model for the broader community.

And I am confident that consistent nutritional messages in our hospitals will ultimately improve the health of staff and the public, and reduce obesity and its devastating costs in Queensland.

I commend this strategy to all staff and visitors to Queensland Health facilities.

Through better food and nutrition we can improve the health and well-being of all Queenslanders.

Stephen Robertson MP
Minister for Health

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Aims and Objectives

A Better Choice Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Health Facilities (A Better Choice) aims to make healthier choices easier choices by increasing the availability of healthier foods and drinks to Queensland Health staff, visitors and the general public.

This will be achieved by creating an environment which actively promotes and provides a greater choice of nutritious food and drinks in all Queensland Health facilities.

This strategy applies to all situations where food or drinks are provided to staff, visitors and the general public in facilities owned and operated by Queensland Health.

The objectives of *A Better Choice* are:

- to improve the availability of healthy choices
- to identify and promote healthy choices
- to identify and reduce the availability of less healthy choices
- to ensure healthy choices are available at all times.

The overall intent of this strategy is to work towards increasing healthier options to at least 80 per cent of foods and drinks displayed whilst restricting less healthy options to no more than 20 per cent of foods and drinks displayed. No food or drink is completely banned under *A Better Choice*. The guiding principles of this strategy aim to improve the availability and promotion of healthier choices and limit the supply and promotion of less healthy options over time.

A Better Choice focuses on the foods and drinks prepared, supplied or purchased by Queensland Health for staff, visitors and the general public. The strategy does not apply to foods and/or drinks that staff bring from home (eg. birthday cake) or instances where foods and/or drinks are purchased and provided by external agencies (eg. external conference). Queensland Health employees are strongly encouraged to model healthy eating behaviours at all times.

Recommendations regarding the supply, display, advertising and placement of foods and drinks are outlined within relevant sections of this document along with information including:

- the nutritional value of foods and drinks
- healthier food and drink choices
- guidelines outlining application to various food outlets
- criteria to identify food and drinks that need to be restricted.

This document is one of a number of resources to help facilities meet the objectives and intent of *A Better Choice*. All resources can be downloaded from the *A Better Choice* website <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/abetterchoice/>



Rationale

Good nutrition is essential for the normal growth and development of infants and children, enhanced resilience and quality of life, good physical and mental health throughout life, resistance to infection and protection against chronic disease and premature death.¹

Like many other countries, Australia is facing an obesity epidemic affecting more than half of all adults and almost one in four children. At the Queensland Obesity Summit in May 2006, the Premier announced \$21 million over the next three years for partnerships, grants, facilities and other resources to promote healthy eating and physical activity. One of these key initiatives, *A Better Choice* will address the supply and promotion of healthier food and drinks to staff, visitors and the general public at all Queensland Health facilities.

One-third of the Australian food dollar is now spent on foods sourced outside the home.² These foods usually contain more fat and sugar than foods prepared at home or those sold in the past.² With growing rates of overweight and obesity, it is important that food outlets provide and promote a wide variety of nutritious foods to create an environment that supports healthier choices.

A Better Choice provides a framework to improve the availability and promotion of healthier foods and drinks; making healthy choices easier choices. This strategy covers all facilities owned and operated by Queensland Health such as hospitals, community health centres or clinics, rehabilitation centres, and office buildings.

A Better Choice incorporates all situations where foods and/or drinks are supplied to Queensland Health staff, visitors and the general public including:

- canteens or kiosks
- vending machines
- catering at functions, meetings or special events
- fundraising activities, events or prizes
- cafés or coffee shops.

A Better Choice strategy does not apply to in-patient, client and/or aged-care resident meals. Nutritional recommendations for these populations are included in *Queensland Health Food Service Policy, Guidelines & Standards*,³ as well as Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency's *Accreditation Standards*.⁴

A Better Choice is primarily about the supply of food and drink to adults. However due to the special nutrition needs of children, some additional recommendations apply to paediatric facilities and those areas frequented by children.

A Better Choice reflects scientific evidence from several key documents and initiatives to create a supportive environment for healthy eating to prevent chronic diseases; refer to the box below.

1. Queensland Public Health Forum. 2002, *Eat Well Queensland 2002–2012: Smart Eating for a Healthier State*, Queensland Public Health Forum, Brisbane.

2. Stanton, R. 2006, 'Nutrition problems in an obesogenic environment', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 184, no.2. pp 76–79.

3. Queensland Health. 1998, *Queensland Health Food Service Policy, Guidelines and Standards*, Queensland Government, Brisbane.

4. Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency. 1997, 'Accreditation Standards', Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency, [Online] Available at: <http://www.accreditation.org.au/AccreditationStandards>



Key supporting documents and initiatives

- Creating Supportive Environments for Healthy Eating, Central Area Population Health Service, 2006.
- Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases, World Health Organisation, 2003.
- Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003.
- Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003.
- Eat Well Queensland 2002-2012: Smart Eating for a Healthier State, Queensland Public Health Forum, 2002.
- Evaluation and Quality Improvement Program, The Australian Council on Healthcare Standards, 4th edition, 2004.
- Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, World Health Organisation, 2004.
- Health Promotion in Hospitals: Evidence and Quality Management, World Health Organisation, 2005.
- Health Promotion in Hospitals Project, World Health Organisation, 2005.
- Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand, National Health and Medical Reference Council, 2006.
- Population Health Chronic Disease Prevention Outcome Area Plan 2006-2009, Queensland Health, 2006.
- Primary Prevention of Chronic Diseases: The Role of Nutrition, Queensland Health, 2003.
- Queensland Strategy for Chronic Disease 2005-2015, Queensland Health, 2005.
- Strategic Plan 2006 – 2011, Queensland Health, 2006.
- The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 1998.

The process for developing *A Better Choice* included:

- review of scientific literature
- audit of food outlets across Queensland Health facilities to map foods and drinks supplied
- investigation into case studies of existing work within Queensland Health facilities
- review of current nutrient profiling approaches
- formation of a steering committee comprised of expert representatives from Queensland Health staff including catering and food service, nutrition, health promotion, and human resources; as well as external representatives from professional associations and unions
- identification of scope, approach and possible implementation options
- development of nutrient criteria including modelling the supply of products
- finalisation of strategy implementation, scientific content and scope following consultation with key stakeholders.

A Better Choice builds on the Queensland Government's *Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools*. School communities have reported positive outcomes from implementing *Smart Choices* including:

- increased patronage of tuckshops
- increased profits in the tuckshop
- greater personal satisfaction from operating a healthy food service
- creation of a more supportive environment through healthy fundraising and

Role of Queensland Health facilities

Queensland Health values the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders. In accordance with the outcomes of the Premier's Obesity Summit, and *Eat Well Queensland: Smart Eating for a Healthier State*, Queensland Health has clear responsibility for leadership in promoting healthier lifestyles throughout the state. There are many examples of how promoting good nutrition in the workplace increases productivity, decreases absenteeism, and creates a supportive environment for healthy behaviours.

Queensland Health has an important role in promoting healthy eating practises to staff, visitors and the general public. By modelling healthy food and drink choices, *A Better Choice* helps develop an environment that supports behaviours that protect and promote health.



When applying *A Better Choice*, facilities should be guided by the following principles:

- the focus of the strategy is on foods and drinks supplied to Queensland Health staff, visitors and the general public
- facilities should provide consistent messages about healthy eating
- short-term profit should not come before the health and wellbeing of the staff, visitors and the general public.

A Better Choice provides an opportunity for Queensland Health staff along with volunteers, and retail personnel, to work together to improve the health and well-being of all Queenslanders. Improving the availability of healthy food choices, promoting healthy choices, reducing the availability of less healthy choice and ensuring healthy choices are available at all times will help create an environment that supports healthy eating, leading to a healthier Queensland.

