

## Section 1 – Introduction

Welcome to the *A Better Choice Tool Kit*. This resource package will assist Queensland Health facilities meet the requirements of the *A Better Choice Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy*. The strategy document is essential background reading for this *Tool Kit*.

### What is A Better Choice?

*A Better Choice* is all about offering healthy food and drink choices to staff and visitors in Queensland Health facilities.

The strategy provides a framework to improve the availability and promotion of foods and drinks consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults (2003)* to create an environment that makes healthy choices easier. *A Better Choice* builds on the Queensland Government's *Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools* and other Queensland Health projects that have implemented healthy food and drink choices.

The strategy applies to all situations where food or drinks are provided to staff and visitors in facilities owned and operated by Queensland Health such as hospitals, community health centres or office buildings. Recommendations regarding various aspects of what foods and drinks are to be supplied, displayed, advertised, and promoted are outlined within relevant sections of the strategy document. Refer to page 3 for more information on making a better choice.

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 good health.

### The A Better Choice Tool Kit

#### Why a Tool Kit?

This *Tool Kit* is a user-friendly resource to assist health facilities to plan, promote, manage, implement and review the *A Better Choice* (ABC) strategy.

#### What is in the Tool Kit?

The *A Better Choice Tool Kit* is set out in eight sections:

**Section 1** provides background information.

**Section 2** provides ways of getting started.

**Section 3** provides information to help with assessing the current situation.

**Section 4** provides help around planning changes and developing alternatives.

**Section 5** provides tips for areas beyond canteens, cafes and kiosks.

**Section 6** is about managing the change process and getting on with the job. There are tips and hints on managing staff, food, and promotions.

**Section 7** is about keeping up the momentum and reviewing progress.

**Section 8** contains the appendices.

Sections 1 – 6 begin by outlining the key elements for success. This helps users to see what they are aiming for as they work through the material.



Case studies providing tips and ideas from facilities that are working towards *A Better Choice* are also included. The 'Check your progress' component at the end of sections helps with reviewing progress. Checklists and planning tools are also provided as templates on the CD-ROM.

## A Better Choice – Background

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.<sup>1</sup>

One-third of the Australian food dollar is now spent on foods sourced outside the home.<sup>2</sup> These foods usually contain more fat and sugar than foods prepared at home or those sold in the past.<sup>2</sup>

Like many other countries, Australia is facing an obesity epidemic affecting more than half of all adults and almost one in four children. 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.

The Queensland Government is working towards creating supportive environments to encourage healthy eating and physical activity to make healthy choices easier choices.

Examples include a range of initiatives across the community such as the *Eat Well Be Active Social Marketing Campaign*, *Go for 2 and 5® Fruit and Vegetable Campaign*, *The Green Label Program*, *Queensland Community Partnerships Grants Program*, *Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools*, *10,000 Steps Challenge*, *TravelSmart* and *Easy Steps*.

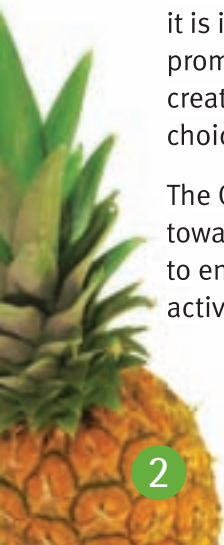
At the Queensland Obesity Summit in May 2006, the Premier announced \$21 million over the next three years for partnerships, grants, facilities and other resources to promote healthy eating and physical activity. One of these key initiatives, the *A Better Choice* strategy was released by the Minister for Health on 20 August 2007. The strategy aims to address the supply and promotion of healthier foods and drinks to staff and visitors at all Queensland Health facilities.

Copies of the strategy and associated materials were sent to all Queensland Health facilities in September 2007. *A Better Choice* is being implemented over 12 months to allow facilities sufficient time to review the foods and drinks supplied, and make necessary changes.

From 1 September 2008 the strategy will be mandatory across all facilities owned and operated by Queensland Health. It is important to refer to the ABC strategy while working through the *Tool Kit*.

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.



## Making A Better Choice

*A Better Choice* provides a framework to ensure foods of good nutritional quality are supplied in Queensland Health facilities. Foods and drinks have been classified into three categories according to their nutritional value: **GREEN**, **AMBER** and **RED**.

### **GREEN = Best choices**

**GREEN** foods and drinks should be actively promoted and encouraged as the *best choices*.

### **AMBER = Choose carefully**

**AMBER** choices are mainly processed foods and drinks that should be supplied in smaller quantities than **GREEN** foods and should not be actively promoted.

### **RED = Limit**

Foods and drinks from the **RED** category are not an essential part of a balanced diet and it is recommended that these foods and drinks are only consumed occasionally and in small amounts.

The strategy limits the supply of **RED** products to no more than 20 per cent of the foods and drinks displayed in all food outlets. **RED** foods and drinks are also not to be:

- promoted or advertised
- displayed in prominent areas
- stocked in vending machines
- supplied at meetings or functions
- used in fundraising activities conducted in Queensland Health facilities.

A set of nutrient criteria have been developed to determine whether a food or drink falls into the **RED** category (refer to page 18 – 19 of the ABC strategy for the ‘Nutrient criteria to identify **RED** foods and drinks’).

*A Better Choice* is primarily about the supply of foods and drinks to adults. However due to the special nutrition needs of children, some additional recommendations apply to paediatric facilities and settings.

For more details regarding the three categories and specific recommendations refer to pages 9 – 16 of the ABC strategy.

## Making healthier choices easier

The overall intent of this strategy is to increase nutritious food and drink choices whilst restricting less healthy options within Queensland Health facilities. No food or drink is completely banned under *A Better Choice*. The guiding principles of the strategy aim to improve the availability and promotion of healthier choices and limit the supply and promotion of less healthy options.

The strategy focuses on situations where the foods and drinks are supplied to staff and visitors. Supply includes those foods and drinks offered for sale or provided.

The strategy does not apply to foods or drinks staff bring from home. Queensland Health staff are encouraged to assist with implementation of the strategy by modelling healthy eating practices. In-patient, client and/or aged-care resident meals are also excluded from the strategy.

# Making A Better Choice

## Best choices - GREEN category

Choose **GREEN** foods and drinks **OFTEN** as they are the most nutritious choices. Enjoy a wide variety of **GREEN** foods and drinks every day because they:

- are excellent sources of important nutrients for good health and wellbeing
- are low in saturated fat and/or added sugar and/or salt
- help avoid an excess energy intake (kilojoules or calories).



## Choose carefully - AMBER category

Choose **AMBER** foods and drinks **SOMETIMES** as they are mainly processed and have some sugar, salt and/or fat added to them. These foods and drinks should be selected carefully because they generally:

- have some nutritional value, but
- can, in large serve sizes, contribute to excess energy intake (kilojoules or calories).



## Limit - RED category

Choose **RED** foods and drinks **RARELY** as they are not an essential part of a balanced diet. It is recommended that these foods and drinks are only consumed occasionally and in small amounts as they:

- lack nutritional value
- are energy dense and can contribute to excess energy intake (kilojoules or calories)
- are high in added fats, saturated fat, and/or sugar and/or salt.



## Guiding principles

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 evidence-based messages about healthy eating;
- short-term profit should not come before the health and wellbeing of the staff, visitors and the general public.

## Scope

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

- canteens, kiosks or cafés;
- vending machines;
- catering provided at functions, meetings or special events;
- fundraising activities, events or prizes;
- leased premises that sell foods or drinks (ie. newsagency in a hospital).

Healthy eating practices should be actively supported across all facilities.

## Kiosks, cafés or coffee carts

All food outlets are required to supply a variety of **GREEN** foods and drinks. **AMBER** foods and drinks are not restricted in supply, however large serve sizes are to be avoided and healthier options within this category are to be included. Refer to sections 3 and 4 for examples.

A maximum of 20 per cent of foods and drinks displayed can be **RED** choices ie. one in five options. Foods and drinks from the **AMBER**

and **RED** categories must not be promoted (ie. displayed in excessive quantities or prominent areas such as beside cash registers), or advertised (ie. signage featuring **RED** or **AMBER** choices on cabinets or fridges).

## Staff dining rooms or canteens

Foods and drinks provided and/or sold to staff must comply with the strategy's recommendations for food outlets as stated above. If staff are supplied with meals from in-patient food services healthier options for each meal time are encouraged where **RED** options are limited to 20 per cent of choices ie. one in five.

Try to provide healthier alternatives on days with several **RED** choices ie. if the main hot lunch meal is a meat pie with chips offer lean meat such as roast beef with vegetables and bread roll or sandwiches.

## Tea trolleys

Trolleys that sell foods and/or drinks to staff and visitors must comply with the strategy's recommendations for food outlets as stated above. The strategy does not apply to tea trolleys that supply and/or sell foods and/or drinks exclusively to in-patients ie. mid-meal trolley.

## Vending machines

Vending machines which are accessible to staff and visitors must not stock or advertise foods or drinks from the **RED** category. Foods and drinks from the **AMBER** category can be displayed and stocked in machines however these are not to be actively promoted or advertised. **GREEN** foods and drinks are to be actively promoted and available at all times.

The strategy recommendations do not apply to vending machines that are for the exclusive use of aged care residents and/or in-patients.

### Catering at meetings and functions

Foods and/or drinks that are provided, purchased and/or delivered to Queensland Health facilities for the consumption of staff and/or visitors are required to comply with the strategy where **RED** choices are not to be supplied.

Mandatory catering guidelines have been developed to assist facilities to provide foods and drinks of good nutritional quality at meetings and functions paid for by Queensland Health and/or conducted within Queensland Health facilities. All Queensland Health food services that provide catering at meetings, activities and/or events for Queensland Health staff and visitors are also required to comply.

For more details refer to the *A Better Choice Catering Guidelines for Meetings and Functions* and catering fact sheet available at <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/abetterchoice/> (for internal Queensland Health staff), or on-line at [http://www.health.qld.gov.au/health\\_professionals/food/default.asp#choice](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/health_professionals/food/default.asp#choice).

### Leased premises selling foods or drinks

To align with the intent of *A Better Choice*, leased premises within Queensland Health facilities that sell food or drinks will also be required to comply with the strategy over time ie. a privately-run coffee shop in a community health centre.

All new leases undertaken from 20 August 2007 will include a clause and checklist which outline recommendations regarding the supply, promotion, advertising and placement of foods and drinks. Those tenants with current leases will be required to comply with *A Better Choice* once their lease is renewed and/or renegotiated.

More information is available at <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/abetterchoice/> (for internal

Queensland Health staff) or on-line at [http://www.health.qld.gov.au/health\\_professionals/food/default.asp#choice](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/health_professionals/food/default.asp#choice) including copies of the lease clause and checklist.

### Fundraising events conducted by and/or within Queensland Health

Under *A Better Choice* foods and drinks from the **RED** category must not be used in fundraising activities conducted by and/or within Queensland Health facilities. Queensland Health facilities are encouraged to consider fundraising drives, gifts, prizes, activities and/or products that promote health and well-being to complement the ABC strategy.

For more information regarding fundraising requirements refer to the ABC strategy and fact sheet available at <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/abetterchoice/> (for internal Queensland Health staff) or on-line at [http://www.health.qld.gov.au/health\\_professionals/food/default.asp#choice](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/health_professionals/food/default.asp#choice).

### Prizes, gifts and rewards

Food and drink prizes, gifts or rewards that are provided to staff and visitors, including vouchers for foods or drinks, must be from the **GREEN** or **AMBER** categories. Rewarding with confectionery or alcoholic beverages sends the wrong message and reinforces **RED** foods or drinks which are already being consumed excessively.

### Paediatric settings

Paediatric settings include all areas in a paediatric hospital, all areas in child health care clinic or community centre, and wards that provide services for children (aged 0 – 14 years) in adult hospitals.

Under the strategy, additional recommendations for paediatric settings are:

- All non-sugar, zero sugar, low joule and/or diet soft drinks are considered **RED** choices;
- All caffeinated beverages are considered **RED** choices.

### One-off **RED** occasions for special events

Discreet one-off special events that involve and/or are associated with Queensland Health and involve the broader community will be allowed to provide **RED** foods and/or drinks. One or more **RED** items can be provided at a designated special event where healthier food and/or drink options are still encouraged.

Examples of one-off **RED** occasions include:

- An annual special event that involves Queensland Health and the broader community ie. Charity day, community fete or show;
- A hospital or service's centennial birthday celebration;
- A staff Christmas lunch provided by Queensland Health.

**RED** occasions should be limited to special events such as those described above. Individual Health Service Districts are required to designate and monitor **RED** occasions.

Periodic or frequent activities, for example monthly cake stalls or multiple raffles

associated with annual dates ie. Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, are not considered significant special events. These situations must comply with the ABC strategy. Please refer to relevant sections of the strategy regarding the supply of foods and drinks including catering and fundraising situations.

### Making the change to A Better Choice

#### A process for planning and managing better choices

There is more to improving food choices than simply changing the types of foods and drinks that are sold. Recent evaluation of the *Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools* revealed those schools that achieved great success undertook a planned holistic approach that addressed management, promotion, and operational skills in tuckshops and promoted consistent messages across the school setting.

The process pictured in Figure 1 shows the steps that can be taken in planning and managing changes to provide and promote better foods choices across Queensland Health facilities. This is a flexible process that can be tailored to meet the needs of each site and food outlet. It can also be used to review and plan food and drink options across an entire facility.



The steps in the process are described briefly below.

### Getting started

Before taking action it is important to know what the ABC strategy is about and communicate this to staff and customers. Facilities should also consider establishing a committee or working group to help plan and manage the change process.

### Assessing the current situation

The next step is to form a picture of the current situation. This involves reviewing the menu, assessing how foods and drinks are displayed as well as looking at the management practices and identifying areas that may need improvement.

### Developing actions and alternatives

The next steps identify the changes required and the best way to introduce new foods. Templates are provided to help prompt discussion and record decisions made by the committee. These will relate to the areas for improvement identified in the previous step. Important menu planning considerations, recipe guidelines and practical tips for designing a healthier menu are also covered.

### Getting on with the job

The organisation of staff, money, food and promotions all play a very important part in implementing *A Better Choice*. This *Tool Kit* provides a range of ideas to streamline organisation and workflow, manage stock, improve money management, promote healthier food choices, attract and keep paid staff and volunteers.

An Improvement Checklist on page 54 is designed to assist with this process. The checklist clearly identifies the key elements for success in the operation and management processes to increase the proportion of healthy choices.

### Maintaining the momentum

It is always important to reflect on progress and to seek and incorporate feedback. Further actions and alternatives may need to be developed and applied, followed by subsequent evaluation. Once you have achieved the ABC strategy's recommendations it will be important to maintain the momentum to continue to introduce and serve healthier choices to customers.

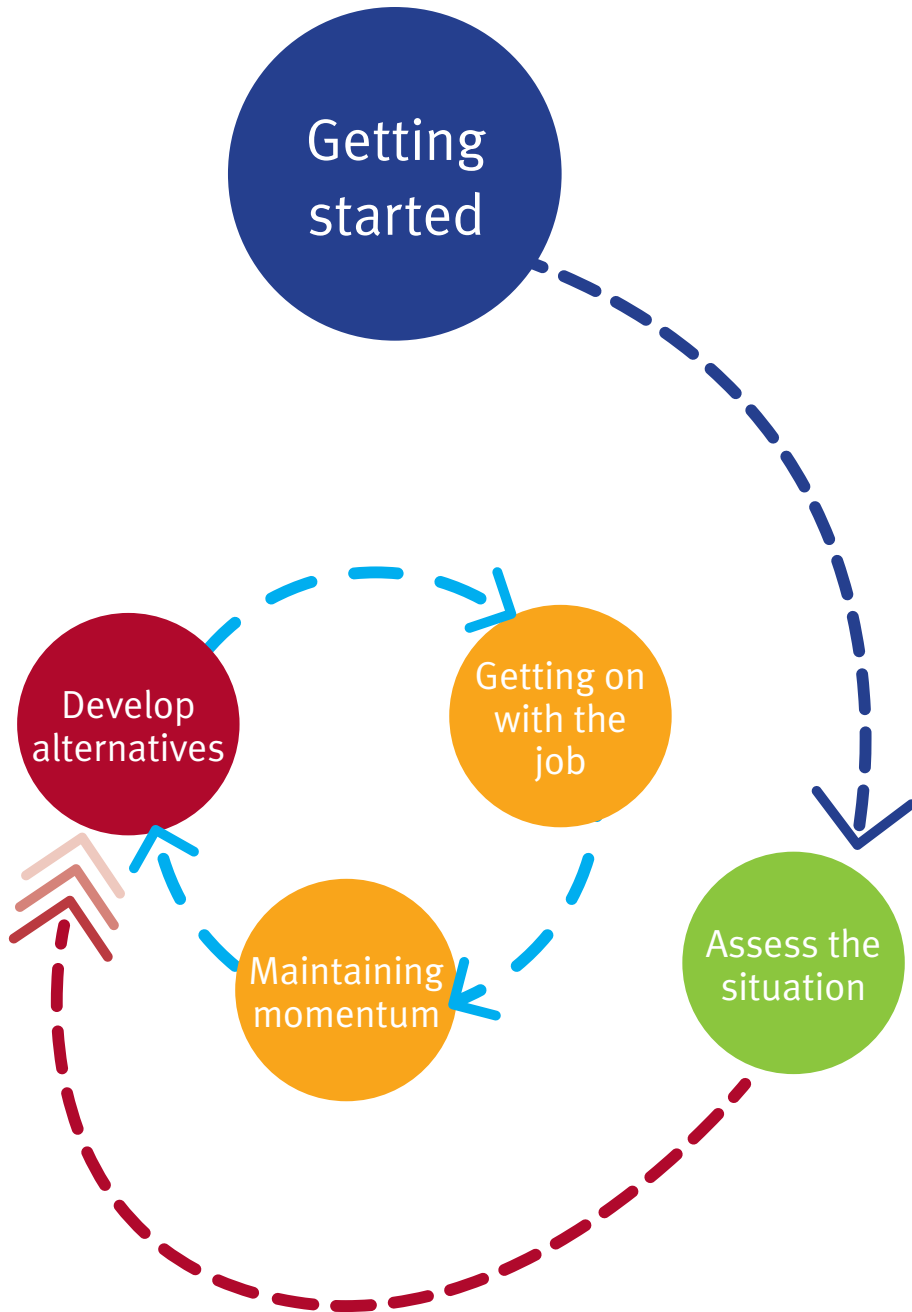


Figure 1. Process for planning and managing changes to implement *A Better Choice*

