

Making the change to healthier eating: local government

Introducing a healthy food and beverage initiative at North Melbourne Recreation Centre

The City of Melbourne developed the 'Green Light Eat Right' program in 2008. This program aims to enable consumers to make informed food and drink choices.

In 2010, the *Green Light Eat Right* program was implemented at a seasonal café at the North Melbourne Recreation Centre, which offers a gym year round and a pool during the summer. Over the next four years, the availability of 'red' items were reduced, and then all 'red' items were removed in 2014 as part of a 'No Red' trial. Following success of this trial, ongoing changes were implemented over the 2015/16 season.

Results of the 'No Red' trial



The 'No Red' trial led to a sharp decline in 'red' products sold, alongside an increase of 'green' and 'amber' product sales.



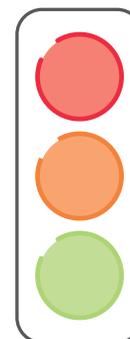
A key factor in the 'No Red' trial success was the appointment of program champions who led the implementation of the healthy eating changes.



There was minimal impact on total sales revenue, which stabilised during following seasons after an initial decline.

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People want to make the healthy choice... (and) needed something to help them make that choice.”



The City of Melbourne developed the 'Green Light Eat Right' program in 2008, using a traffic light system to classify food and drinks. This was later aligned with the Victorian Government's *Healthy choices: food and drink classification guide*.¹

-  **Red:** Limit intake
-  **Amber:** Choose carefully
-  **Green:** Best choice

Keys to success

Several key factors were perceived as enablers of a successful change to healthier products at the recreation centre:



Practical support to source suppliers, train staff and provide nutrition advice



Champions of the trial were catalysts of change and important communicators



Making healthy eating a priority across the organisation



Feedback from the initial stages of the trial showed minimal impact on overall sales

Challenges

- Supply: healthy items are often perishable and require more in-house preparation than 'red' items, so it was a challenge to find healthier replacement items without excessive food wastage.
- Upskilling and engaging with staff.
- Providing staff with resources to help them meet customer queries.

These challenges were overcome with a number of strategies, outlined in the recommendations below.

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Having a champion to really own it and drive it, and come up with creative initiatives.”

Recommendations for organisations introducing healthy eating policies



Develop strong communication between all stakeholders throughout the process.



Employ nutrition experts to assist in identifying suppliers, selecting foods that are both healthy and practical to store and prepare.



Establish top-down support of the implementation through a healthy eating policy.



Ensure regular and comprehensive staff training to promote understanding and engagement.



Evaluate and feedback throughout the process to ensure sustainability of the changes.



Appoint healthy eating champions to encourage and motivate stakeholders.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 requires all councils in Victoria to facilitate an environment and culture where healthy choices are easy choices for all Victorians.

For more information about City of Melbourne's trials and other organisations' work to implement Healthier Choices, visit: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/easychoice

For information and support with implementing Healthy Choices in your organisation, visit: www.heas.health.vic.gov.au



¹ Department of Health and Human Services 2015, *Healthy choices: food and drink classification guide*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.