Promoting and supporting Healthy food & drink choices

hospital and healthcare facilities

Call to action: health sector to lead in healthier food and drink choices for visitors and staff

Australian communities look to the health sector to play an exemplary role in promoting health and wellbeing. Prevention of chronic disease and obesity is core business for healthcare services and central to improving the health and wellbeing of the population. With a national workforce of more than 360 000 people[i] and an authoritative and credible voice in the community, this sector has a significant opportunity to lead the way in the promotion of healthy eating and the creation of enabling environments to support healthy food and drink choices. Through broad partnerships between Governments, healthcare services, their food and drink providers and the community more broadly, a standard can be set that enables healthy eating for all Australians. Australian Health Ministers call on the public healthcare sector to lead a strong collective effort to make healthy food and drinks the easy choice.

Intent

This Call to Action is made to reinforce the public healthcare sector's leadership role in creating and maintaining supportive environments which encourage Australians to continue to make healthy food and drink choices. The Call to Action does not extend to inpatient menus, residential and aged care meals and food and drinks brought from home by staff, patients and visitors for personal consumption.

Leading through partnership

Health is everyone's business; achieving environments where healthy food and drink choices are mainstream not marginal will require leadership which takes a community-wide approach. Governments, food industry, business, media, community groups, sport and recreation facilities and Australians have a shared interest and responsibility to support communities to achieve this fundamental change. This change will be realised when the promotion and availability of healthy food and drinks for both visitors and the health workforce increases significantly throughout healthcare facilities. Australian Health Ministers commend to healthcare services the standards set out in *Healthy food and drink choices in public sector healthcare settings for staff and visitors: Goals, principles and recommended nutritional standards* in rising to better meet the challenge and responsibility in achieving this change.

The benefits of leading change

Healthcare sector leadership in supporting healthier food and drink choices aligns with the National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions[ii] and the WHO Global Action Plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases 2013-2020[iii], the latter of which calls on governments to take strong policy action, and recommends promoting the availability of healthy food in all public institutions.

Government actions can reinforce consumer and business trends towards healthier living. Reviews in some healthcare services demonstrate that consumers in these settings are increasingly demanding healthier food and drink options. Evidence also shows that healthy changes are not adversely impacting sales of food businesses.[iv]

The cost of inaction

The impetus for dietary change is in the substantial and rising cost of chronic disease to the community, much of which is preventable. The widespread availability of healthy food and drinks in health care settings reinforces with health care objectives and sets a poor example for the community. Unhealthy food and drink choices are significant contributors to the rise in chronic disease. Treating chronic disease within the Australian health system is estimated to cost 27 billion dollars a year, or 36% of all health spending[v]. Leading change which progressively redeems even a portion of these costs will unlock substantial benefits for Australian communities.

The Hon Natasha Fyles MLA
Chair, Health Council

Promoting and supporting

Healthy food & drink choices

hospital and healthcare facilities



References

[i] Nationally, about 360,000 FTE staff were employed in providing public hospital services in 2015–16. (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/d37a56cb-dc6b-4b28-a52f-8e00f606ce67/21035.pdf.aspx?inline=true; accessed 07/11/18). These figures do not include those working in Departments of Health.

[ii] Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions. Australian Government. Canberra. Available at: http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/nsfcc , accessed on 24 July 2018.

[iii] WHO, 2013. Global action plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases 2013-2020. Available at: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/94384/1/9789241506236_eng.pdf?ua=1, accessed on 24 July 2018.

[iv] Huse O, Blake MR, Brooks R, Corben K and Peeters A. The effect on drink sales of removal of unhealthy drinks from display in a self-service café. Public health nutrition 2016; vol. 19, no. 17, pp. 3142-3145, doi: 10.1017/S1368980016002482

[v] AIHW 2017. Hospital Resources 2015-16. Australian Hospital Statistics. Cat. no. HSE 190. Canberra: AIHW.