

# Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI) Australia – Progress update 2019

**Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government**

Policy information (July 2016 – December 2018)



Actions taken (July 2016 – December 2018) by the Australian Capital Territory Government (ACT) in relation to the recommended policies from the 2017 Food Policy Index report

ID	Domain	Recommended policy action	Progress against meeting recommended action
ACT1	Food retail	Expand existing work with retailers and food service outlets to improve in-store availability of healthy foods and limit availability and sales of unhealthy foods	<p><b>Healthier Choices Canberra</b></p> <p>In 2016, the ACT Government implemented the <i>Choose Healthier Business Pilot</i> with the aim of trialling voluntary in-store actions to increase the promotion and availability of healthier food and drinks, and reduce the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks. Five Canberra businesses participated in the pilot, which was implemented in partnership with the Canberra Business Chamber. Evaluation of the pilot showed that businesses can provide and promote healthier choices, without damaging profitability.</p> <p>Following the success of the pilot, on 26 September 2018 the ACT Government launched <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i>. The initiative aims to make it easier for Canberrans to find healthier food and drink options at kids' entertainment venues, club restaurants, cafes, supermarkets, sports canteens and hospital food outlets. To date, over 40 local businesses and sports organisations have signed up to the program. A communications and marketing campaign is being rolled out to promote <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i> branding and motivate consumers towards healthier choices.</p> <p>For more information on <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i> visit <a href="https://health.act.gov.au/healthy-living/healthier-choices-canberra">https://health.act.gov.au/healthy-living/healthier-choices-canberra</a></p>
ACT2	Food promotion	Continue demonstrating leadership in implementing mechanisms to restrict the promotion of unhealthy food and beverages in community and sports settings, and particularly in children's settings	<p><b>Healthier Choices Canberra: Junior Sport</b></p> <p>The ACT Government is implementing the <i>Healthier Choices Canberra (HCC): Junior Sport</i> pilot program with the aim of reducing the exposure of children to unhealthy food and drinks in sport and recreation settings. Activities being delivered under <i>HCC: Junior Sport</i> include a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• upskilling the sports sector to negotiate and secure sponsorship, with an emphasis on aligning junior club sponsorships with health and wellbeing values;</li> <li>• engaging local businesses on the benefits of sports sponsorship;</li> <li>• supporting sports canteens through online learning and business mentoring to provide healthier food and drink options; and</li> <li>• communicating the importance of, and driving demand for, healthier food and drink choices in sports settings.</li> </ul>

			<p>Four state sporting organisations (SSOs) – Netball ACT, Basketball ACT, Canberra Region Rugby League and AFL Canberra – have been the first to sign on to <i>HCC: Junior Sport</i>, with further sports to be engaged from 2019.</p> <p>To drive demand for healthier food and drink choices in sport, including sports canteens, the broader <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i> communications and marketing campaign (see above) will include messaging targeted to parents and club volunteers.</p> <p><b><i>Food and drink marketing on the Transport Canberra bus network</i></b></p> <p>In the ACT, people are concerned about the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks and supportive of government leadership to protect not only children but all members of the community from its influence on food and drink choices. The 2015 Canberra Omnibus Survey showed strong support (88% of respondents) for restricting the advertising of unhealthy food generally, especially around child-oriented places.</p> <p>In response to community concerns, the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services announced in 2015, changes to the Transport Canberra bus marketing policy to restrict, the promotion of ‘junk’ food on public buses.</p> <p>To identify whether a food or drink item is suitable to be marketed on Transport Canberra buses the <i>ACT Healthy Food and Drink Marketing Criteria and Guideline</i> was developed and has been in place since 2016.</p>
<b>ACT3</b>	<b>Monitoring and intelligence</b>	Implement ongoing monitoring of food environments, with a particular focus on the nutritional quality of food provided / available in early childcare settings, schools, and public sector settings (such as hospitals, workplaces, community and sports centres)	<p>The ACT Government has implemented mandatory Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policies in public schools, government workplaces and ACT Health facilities. The Policies support the provision and promotion of healthy food and drink choices in these settings. Regular monitoring is undertaken to assess whether the requirements of the Policies are being met and substantial improvements have been measured.</p> <p><b><i>ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy</i></b></p> <p>The ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy was introduced by the ACT Education Directorate in February 2015. The Policy is mandatory for all ACT Government primary and secondary schools. In independent and Catholic schools, the Policy is not mandatory but highly recommended.</p>

The Policy applies to all food service activities within a school setting, including the sale of food and drinks in school canteens, and to all ACT public school activities and events with the exception of food and drinks sold at occasional fetes, fundraisers and school events no more than twice per term.

There is a total ban on the sale of sugary drinks and vending machines in ACT public school canteens. Vending machines have been removed from all ACT public schools.

ACT Health provides a free service, *Fresh Tastes*, to primary schools to improve children's knowledge, access to and consumption of healthy food and drinks and support implementation of relevant policies, including the ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy.

School canteens are subject to regular menu reviews by an external agency to assess the food and drinks provided and for sale against the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines. The latest assessment of ACT school canteens recorded excellent results, finding that:

- 53% of all public school canteen menu items across the ACT are GREEN
- only 2% of all public school canteen menu items across the ACT are RED
- 40 public school canteens have met the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines.

***ACT Public Sector workplaces and facilities***

As part of the whole of government approach to improving the availability of healthy food and drink at ACT Government workplaces and facilities, the **ACT Public Sector Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy** commenced in July 2016. It applies to catering, fundraising and food outlets which predominantly provide food and drink to ACT public service staff members. As part of the policy, the Healthy Choices Catering Providers List provides staff with a list of menus that meet policy requirements, making it easier to order catering for functions and meetings.

***ACT Health Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy***

ACT Health's Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policy was released in March 2014 and became mandatory a year later. The policy applies to ACT Health facilities (including workplaces, hospitals, health centres, and community health services) and covers all activities including meetings, functions, events, education sessions and fundraising activities. It includes the provision, promotion, placement and sale of food and drinks in all settings including food outlets, vending machines and catering, and food used for fundraising, rewards, incentives, gifts, prizes and give-aways.

The policy applies a traffic light system to categorise food and drinks based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines and the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines. In food outlets and vending machines, the majority of food and drinks should be GREEN; GREEN and AMBER food and drinks should make up at

			<p>least 80 per cent of available products. RED products are not to be used for catering, fundraising, rewards, incentives, gifts, prizes or give-aways. Only GREEN food and drinks should be advertised or promoted and RED and AMBER options should not be advertised, promoted or placed in prominent areas. Tap water should always be available free of charge.</p> <p><b>Review of the Traffic Light Food and Drink Classification System</b>  The Traffic Light Food and Drink Classification System currently underpins all Healthy Food and Drink Choices Policies in the ACT. This includes policies in public schools, healthcare facilities, workplaces, and food and drinks supplied in vending machines.</p> <p>During 2017, a review of the ACT’s Traffic Light Food and Drink Classification System was undertaken to assist in reviewing effectiveness of the ACT Government’s healthy food and drink choice policies.</p> <p>Results of the review are being used towards quality improvement of these policies and related programs and strategies. This includes further exploration of sustainable implementation support mechanisms for Healthy Food and Drinks policies in schools and supporting the Education Directorate’s continued leadership in this area.</p> <p><b>Sports canteens</b>  <i>Healthier Choices Canberra: Junior Sport</i> is supporting sports canteens through online learning and business mentoring to provide healthier food and drink options. The ACT Nutrition Support Service is providing guidance on healthy food and drink items that are suitable for sale through sports canteens. The guidance aligns with the approach to healthy food and drink provision under the <i>Good Sports Healthy Eating Program</i>, to which a number of local clubs are already subscribed.</p> <p><b>Early Childhood Education and Care Services</b>  Early Childhood Education and Care Services are assessed for compliance with the legislation, regulations and standards within the National Quality Framework. Monitoring and enforcement is undertaken by the Children’s Education and Care Assurance area within the Education Directorate. There are no additional ACT-specific requirements applying to these services in relation to food and drink guidelines.</p>
ACT4	Food provision	Develop and implement healthy food provision guidelines for early childhood settings and non-government schools	<p><b>Early Childhood Education and Care Services – as per ACT 3</b></p> <p><b>Kids at Play</b>  The Kids at Play website is aimed at families of children aged 0-5 years and early childhood educators. It includes information, tips, ideas and resources to help educators and parents provide children with a nutritious, balanced diet, including milk and tap water, and to limit the intake of discretionary foods including sugar-sweetened beverages.</p>

			<p><b>Fresh Tastes</b>  <i>Fresh Tastes</i> supports ACT primary schools to improve their food and drink environments, including food and drink provision. Currently, 93 of 108 ACT Government primary schools, 15 of 24 Catholic primary schools, and 12 of 17 independent primary schools are participating in the program. Recruitment is continuing.</p>
ACT5	Support for communities	Continue efforts to improve population nutrition through community education and awareness raising strategies	<p><b>Healthier Choices Canberra</b>  On 26 September 2018, the ACT Government launched <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i>. The initiative aims to make it easier for Canberrans to find healthier food and drink options when out and about and is supported by a dedicated communications and marketing campaign. The campaign utilises a range of channels, including social media, television, print and radio, to engage the community on the importance of healthier eating, and guide consumers to healthier choices at participating <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i> businesses.</p> <p>For more information on <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i> visit <a href="https://health.act.gov.au/healthy-living/healthier-choices-canberra">https://health.act.gov.au/healthy-living/healthier-choices-canberra</a></p> <p><b>Good Habits for Life</b>  Good Habits for Life is a social marketing campaign launched in November 2014 aimed at helping Canberra families with young children aged 8 years and under to take some simple steps to a healthier lifestyle. This initiative is currently under transition to <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i>.</p> <p><b>Kilojoules Display Laws</b>  Under the <i>Food Act 2001</i>, certain standard food outlets are required to display the average energy content of their standard food items in kilojoules. These requirements have been in effect in the ACT since 1 January 2013. The kilojoule display laws aim to support the health of Canberrans by providing information to enable healthier food and drink choices</p> <p><b>Kilojoules on the menu ACT campaign</b>  In June 2018, ACT Health implemented a kilojoule menu labelling awareness campaign. The four week campaign aimed to encourage consumers to notice, read, understand and use kilojoule displays to guide healthier food and drink choices in the ACT. The campaign incorporated poster/panel displays at Gungahlin Marketplace, Tuggeranong Hyperdome, Westfield Belconnen, Westfield Woden and Canberra Centre and was supported by digital media, including a dedicated website and social media posts.</p>

<b>ACT6</b>	<b>Governance</b>	Implement formal health impact assessments as part of policy development and proposal processes, including explicit details about the consideration of potential impacts of policies on population nutrition and health	The ACT Healthy Weight Initiative established a formal whole of government governance mechanism to integrate health considerations in to policy making across sectors.
<b>ACT7</b>	<b>Food retail</b>	Investigate options for amending the Territory Plan and associated planning controls to decrease access to unhealthy take-away foods (e.g., limiting density of outlets, restricting placement of outlets near schools) and increasing access to healthy food outlets	The ACT Government is committed to the promotion and provision of healthier food choices through <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i> .
<b>ACT8</b>	<b>Food promotion</b>	Require all organisations, such as community groups and sports clubs, that receive funding from the ACT government to restrict all promotion (including sponsorship) related to unhealthy food and beverages as a condition of receiving funding	<b><i>Healthier Choices Canberra: Junior Sport</i></b> The ACT Government is implementing the <i>Healthier Choices Canberra (HCC): Junior Sport</i> pilot program with the aim of reducing the exposure of children to unhealthy food and drinks in sport and recreation settings. Activities being delivered under <i>HCC: Junior Sport</i> include a focus on upskilling the sports sector to negotiate and secure sponsorship, with an emphasis on aligning junior club sponsorships with health and wellbeing values.  Participating state sporting organisations and junior clubs participate in an interactive eight week sponsorship training course. The course aims to assist clubs to get ‘sponsorship ready’, identify their sponsorship needs and ambitions, and seek sponsors that align with club values.
<b>ACT9</b>	<b>Support for communities</b>	Put in place community-wide structures, with associated resources, to provide broad and coordinated support for community-based interventions designed to create and maintain healthy food	<b>Healthier Choices Canberra</b> For more information on <i>Healthier Choices Canberra</i> visit <a href="https://health.act.gov.au/healthy-living/healthier-choices-canberra">https://health.act.gov.au/healthy-living/healthier-choices-canberra</a>

		environments across multiple settings	
<b>ACT10</b>	<b>Monitoring and intelligence</b>	Provide funding for oversampling for the ACT in the triennial National Health Survey for the purposes of monitoring BMI and key nutrition indicators of children and adults	<p>ACT Health’s Epidemiology Section has had initial discussions with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) regarding the potential for oversampling the National Health Survey.</p> <p>For the purposes of monitoring BMI and key nutrition indicators, ACT Health administers the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACT General Health Survey (ACTGHS)</li> <li>• ACT Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (ACTPANS)</li> <li>• Australian Secondary Students’ Alcohol and Drug Survey (ASSAD).</li> </ul> <p>For more information, please visit HealthStats ACT.</p>
<b>ACT11</b>	<b>Food labelling</b>	Enhance existing menu labelling regulations by requiring outlets to display interpretive nutrition labelling (broader than kilojoule labelling), potentially through adaptation of the Health Star Rating scheme	The ACT Government report, Review of Display of Nutritional Information for Food, was tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly in September 2018. The report reviews the operation of Part 9 of the Food Act 2001 in accordance with the requirements of section 115 of the Food Act 2001. Data noted in the report found a majority of ACT residents surveyed do not notice or use kilojoule information currently labelled on menu boards despite strong business compliance. These results combined with: identified jurisdictional inconsistencies; a lack of supporting evidence and likely adverse business impacts informed the relevant recommendations of the report supporting that any move to change or expand the ACT’s current menu labelling requirements be undertaken through engagement and discussion at national fora on food and health and supported by a robust policy process. The ACT Government continues to participate in nutrition labelling work on national fora. When this national work is finalised, the ACT Government would then consider enhanced labelling requirements.
<b>ACT12</b>	<b>Monitoring and intelligence</b>	Introduce regular measuring of children’s height and weight at key stages of primary and secondary schools, on an 'opt-out' consent basis	<p><b>Primary school:</b> Children’s height and weight is measured in primary school by ACT Health at age 5/6 (kindergarten) in the Kindergarten Health Check (yearly) and at age 11/12 (year 6) in the ACT Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (three yearly) on an opt-out consent basis.</p> <p><b>Secondary school:</b> Children’s height and weight will be measured in secondary schools by ACT Health at age 12/13 in the Year 7 Health Check (Y7HC), which is still in the planning stages. The Y7HC will replace</p>



			the ACTPANS from 2019. At this stage, the consent model will be on an opt-in basis, however this is still to be determined.
<b>ACT13 Governance</b>	Modify the government lobby register to require more detailed reporting, including details of specific lobbying activities (such as when lobbying is occurring, who is involved, and the issues discussed)		An ACT Legislative Assembly Committee will investigate developing the public register of lobbyists in Canberra with reporting expected later in the year.
<b>ACT14 Governance</b>	Improve transparency of political donations by introducing real-time declaration of political donations		Nil to report

Additional actions/policies/progress related to improving the food environment / obesity prevention / population nutrition (not captured above)	
Action	Details
1. The ACT Government is committed to the development of the <i>Healthy and Active Living Strategy</i> : a comprehensive and collaborative preventive health strategy for Canberra.	<p>Thanks to considerable effort in the community, many of the <i>Healthy Weight Initiative</i> activities are now complete and the final evaluation is underway. There are some activities that continue to be delivered and work is being undertaken to transition these into activities that are embedded in our schools, workplaces and food outlets.</p> <p>A framework outlining the components of a collaborative approach to a comprehensive <i>Healthy and Active Living Strategy</i> has been drafted. The framework will guide the strategy to create environments that protect and promote health and wellbeing.</p> <p>To support this important new approach, the ACT Government has committed \$4 million over four years.</p>

# Appendix

## Definitions

- **Food:** refers to food and non-alcoholic beverages. It excludes breastmilk or breastmilk substitutes.
- **Food environments:** the collective physical, economic, policy and socio-cultural surrounding, opportunities and conditions that influence people’s food and beverage choices and nutritional status.
- **Government:** includes any government departments and, where appropriate, other agencies (i.e. statutory bodies such as offices, commissions, authorities, boards, councils, etc). Plans, strategies or actions by local government are not included, although relevant information can be noted if relevant.
- **Government implementation:** refers to the intentions and plans of the government and actions and policies implemented by the government as well as government funding for implementation of actions undertaken by non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, private companies (including consultants), etc.
- **Healthy/unhealthy food:** Categorisation of foods as healthy / unhealthy are in accordance with the Australian Dietary Guidelines (i.e. core and discretionary foods). Where it is not clear which category to use, categorisation of foods should be informed by rigorous criteria or the use of a nutrient profiling model.
- **Policy actions:** A broad view of “policy” is taken so as to include all government policies, plans, strategies and activities. Evidence of policy implementation takes consideration of the whole policy cycle, from agenda-setting through to policy development, implementation and monitoring. Policy progress may include, *inter alia*:
  - Evidence of commitments from leadership to explore policy options
  - Allocation of responsibility to an individual/team (documented in a work plan, appointment of new position)
  - Establishment of a steering committee, working group, expert panel, etc.
  - Review, audit or scoping study undertaken
  - Consultation processes undertaken
  - Evidence of a policy brief/proposal that has been put forward for consideration
  - Preparation of a regulatory or economic impact assessment, health impact assessment, etc.
  - Regulations / legislation / other published policy details
  - Monitoring data
  - Policy evaluation reports