



# Policies for tackling obesity and creating healthier food environments

**2019 progress update  
New South Wales (NSW)  
Government**

March 2019

Further details available at  
[www.foodpolicyindex.org.au](http://www.foodpolicyindex.org.au)

**NSW  
2019**

# Executive summary

Unhealthy diets and obesity are leading contributors to poor health in Australia. Addressing obesity and improving population diets requires a comprehensive government response at Commonwealth and State/Territory levels.

In 2017, a Food Policy Index was developed for Australia to assess the food and diet-related policies that were in place in each jurisdiction, and identify recommended actions for each government based on international best practice.

This report provides a follow up to the 2017 Food Policy Index report. It summarises and assesses the actions taken by the New South Wales (NSW) Government (July 2016 – December 2018) in relation to the recommended policies identified in the 2017 report.

## Key areas in which the NSW Government has made progress



Implementing routine height and weight measures for all children (0-17 years) who attend a NSW Health facility (including oral health clinics)



Updating and implementing the *Healthy Food and Drink in NSW Health Facilities Framework* and the *NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy*



Monitoring and reporting progress against implementation of and compliance with both the *Healthy Food and Drink in NSW Health Facilities Framework* and the *NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy*



## Recommended action areas for the NSW Government

The 2017 Food Policy Index report prioritised 17 recommendations for action. Recommended focus areas for the next 12-18 months are:



**Food provision:** Continue efforts to implement policies on healthy food provision, and extend them to apply across all NSW government departments and settings



**Food promotion:** Implement additional policies to restrict unhealthy food and beverage advertising in all settings controlled or managed by the NSW Government, including public transport infrastructure and sports sponsorship



**Food retail:** Identify policy mechanisms to assist local governments to limit access to unhealthy take-away foods, and to assist retail outlets (including restaurants, pubs and clubs) to improve the healthiness of the foods supplied

# Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI)

In 2017, a Food Policy Index was developed for Australia to assess the extent to which governments in Australia were implementing globally recommended policies for tackling obesity and creating healthier food environments.<sup>1</sup>

The project was conducted as part of INFORMAS,<sup>2</sup> an international network of food policy and public health experts. The project implemented the Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI) tool, developed by INFORMAS to assess government policy across 14 domains related to food environments and applied in >10 countries. As part of the Food-EPI Australia 2017 project, recommended actions for each government (Federal, State and Territory) were developed and prioritised, based on international best practice and consultation with >100 non-government public health experts representing 53 organisations.

## Assessment of progress made

The Food-EPI Australia 2017 report identified and prioritised 17 recommended policy actions for the New South Wales (NSW) Government, as part of efforts to create healthier food environments and address obesity.

**The purpose of this 2019 Progress Update was to assess progress made by the NSW Government in relation to the recommended policy actions.**

Government officials from each jurisdiction in Australia provided information on actions taken by their government in relation to the recommended actions from the Food-EPI Australia 2017 report. This included all activities from **July 2016** (the date up to which policies were assessed in the 2017 report) to **December 2018**.

The actions were summarised, and progress in relation to each recommendation was assessed by the project team as 'Substantive action', 'Some action' or 'Limited action', based on the criteria in Table 1. The full details of actions taken and progress made by other jurisdictions are available at: [www.foodpolicyindex.org.au](http://www.foodpolicyindex.org.au)

### Substantive action

- Implemented substantive action in relation to all or most components of the recommendation

### Some action

- Implemented action in relation to some components of the recommendation; and/or
- Taken steps to initiate or formulate plans in relation to the recommendation, but relevant actions have not yet been implemented

### Limited action

- Taken no substantive action in relation to the recommendation; and/or
- Made no or very limited progress in the area

Table 1: Criteria for assessment of progress made

<sup>1</sup> Sacks G for the Food-EPI Australia project team. Policies for tackling obesity and creating healthier food environments: scorecard and priority recommendations for Australian governments. Melbourne: Deakin University, 2017. Available at: [www.foodpolicyindex.org.au](http://www.foodpolicyindex.org.au)

<sup>2</sup> [www.informas.org](http://www.informas.org)

## Actions taken (July 2016 - December 2018) by the NSW Government in relation to the recommended policies from the 2017 Food Policy Index report

	Domain	Recommended policy action	Progress in relation to recommended action	Assessment
NSW1	Monitoring and intelligence	Implement ongoing monitoring of food environments, including the marketing of unhealthy foods to children, and the nutritional quality of food available in schools and public sector settings	NSW now conducts annual monitoring and progress reporting against implementation of the 2017 <i>'Healthy Food and Drink in NSW Health Facilities for Staff and Visitors Framework'</i> . By 2019, all government primary and secondary schools will be required to meet the <i>'NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy'</i> (launched in 2017). NSW has an independent verification process in place to monitor and assess if school canteens are meeting the Strategy, including that unhealthy foods are not promoted to children. The service is funded to conduct checks to December 2019.	Substantive action
NSW2	Food promotion	Restrict the promotion of unhealthy food and beverages in settings controlled / managed by the New South Wales government	The 2017 <i>'Healthy Food and Drink in NSW Health Facilities for Staff and Visitors Framework'</i> specify that unhealthy foods and drinks should not be promoted in NSW health facilities. The 2017 <i>'NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy'</i> also specifies that unhealthy foods and drinks should not be promoted in both primary and secondary school canteens.	Some action
NSW3	Food labelling	Enhance existing menu labelling regulations by requiring food outlets to display interpretive nutrition labelling, potentially through adaptation of the Health Star Rating scheme	NSW Health continues to work with other jurisdictions implementing menu-labelling legislation to progress a uniform approach. NSW has been instrumental in the work led by the COAG Health Council that includes actions to enhance and better align menu labelling approaches across jurisdictions.	Some action
NSW4	Food provision	Establish a whole-of-government policy on healthy food provision across all New South Wales government departments and settings	NSW Health applies a consistent approach to healthy food provision across several key settings, including: public schools, NSW health facilities and the NSW Office of Sport's 11 sport and recreation centres. This approach has recently been updated to align with the Australian Dietary Guidelines classification of foods, incorporate the Health Star Rating system and establish portion limits. The approach does not extend across all government food provision / procurement.	Substantive action
NSW5	Food provision	Improve compliance with NSW Canteen Strategy in all schools by extending reporting mechanisms, incentives and support systems	All NSW government primary and secondary schools are required to meet the revised 2017 <i>'NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy'</i> by 2019. Catholic and independent schools are strongly encouraged to achieve the strategy. There are a number of support mechanisms and resources available to schools, canteen managers and the food industry to assist in reaching this target.	Substantive action
NSW6	Food retail	Incorporate nutrition / healthy food environments into guidelines for Regional Growth Plans and planning strategies and limit access to unhealthy take-away foods through planning provisions	The majority of regional plans in NSW recognise the need to help keep fresh food available locally. The Regional Plan for Sydney, updated in 2018, includes a strategy and actions to promote local access to healthy fresh food and to support local fresh food production.	Some action
NSW7	Funding and resources	Establish an independent, statutory health promotion agency, with a secure funding stream, that includes an objective to improve population nutrition	The NSW Office of Preventive Health is focused on health promotion and its objectives and functions clearly establish a priority for improving population nutrition.	Some action

NSW8	Monitoring and intelligence	Introduce regular measuring of children's height and weight at key stages of primary and secondary schools, on an 'opt-out' consent basis	NSW Health is implementing routine height and weight measures for all children (0-17 years) who attend a NSW Health facility (including oral health clinics). This initiative aims to improve routine growth and weight monitoring of all children (guidelines published in November 2017).	Substantive action
NSW9	Food promotion	Require all organisations that receive funding from the New South Wales Government to restrict all promotion (including sponsorship) related to unhealthy food and beverages as a condition of funding	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action
NSW10	Food retail	Expand programs to incentivise sports and recreation clubs to sell healthier foods and beverages whilst limiting unhealthy foods and beverages	The NSW Office of Sport has committed to align with the NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy in their 11 Sport and Recreation Centres. NSW Health continues to fund the 'Finish with the Right Stuff' program, which encourages community based sport clubs to provide and promote healthy food and drink at their canteens, and has actively recruited 300 clubs / associations across NSW from 2016-2018.	Substantive action
NSW11	Food provision	Actively promote healthy workplace initiatives and associated resources to private sector workplaces, and monitor and evaluate progress	NSW Health continues to support the 'Get Healthy at Work' initiative for the private sector, and has developed a workplace Health Program Action Plan targeting Healthy Eating. Associated resources have recently aligned with the Healthy Food and Drink NSW Health Facilities framework, to ensure a consistent approach across NSW settings. There is no published monitoring and evaluation plan.	Some action
NSW12	Governance	Improve transparency of political donations by introducing real-time declaration of political donations	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action
NSW13	Food retail	Implement programs, e.g., incentives or accreditation schemes, for restaurants, pubs and clubs to improve the healthiness of their menu options	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action
NSW14	Governance	Implement formal health impact assessments on population nutrition and health as part of policy development and proposal process	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action
NSW15	Governance	Establish governance structures to improve policy coherence regarding agriculture, food, health, and innovation / research and development policies	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action
NSW16	Governance	Modify the government lobby register to require more detailed reporting, including details of specific lobbying activities	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action
NSW17	Governance	Add food manufacturers (and associated entities) to the list of prohibited political donors	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action

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The project forms part of INFORMAS (International Network for Food and Obesity/NCD's Research, Monitoring, Action and Support), a global network of public interest organisations and researchers that seek to monitor and benchmark public and private sector actions to create healthier food environments and reduce obesity and NCD's globally.

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For more details on the Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI) project go to: [www.foodpolicyindex.org.au](http://www.foodpolicyindex.org.au)



