

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

Victorian Government

Policy information (July 2016 – December 2018)



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

ID	Domain	Recommended policy action	Progress against meeting recommended action
VIC1	Support for communities	Put in place overarching state-wide structures, with associated resources, to provide broad and coordinated support for creating and maintaining healthy food environments at the community level across multiple settings	<p>The Victorian Government has a suite of Healthy Choices policy guidelines for sport and recreation facilities, hospitals, health services, workplaces and parks, as well as aligned policies for schools and early childcare settings that provide consistent healthy food supply standards across multiple settings. To support implementation across the state, the Victorian Government funds the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) to coordinate support across these settings to improve the supply and promotion of healthy foods and drinks, and to reduce the supply of unhealthy options.</p> <p>In 2018, HEAS released <i>FoodChecker</i>, the first online menu assessment tool in Australia. <i>FoodChecker</i> enables retail providers to assess the healthfulness of the food and drinks they offer and supports them to make healthy changes in order to meet the Healthy Choices guidelines. Support provided by HEAS enables consistent policies to be implemented across the state, maximising scale and reach, while avoiding duplication of resources. As well as online support tools, HEAS provides training and mentoring for health professionals and food retailers, as well as a series of case studies that showcase lead adopters to inspire and demonstrate the business case for change. Please refer to https://heas.healthy.vic.gov.au/</p>
VIC2	Food provision	Establish a whole-of-government policy on healthy food procurement and provision across all Victorian government departments and settings under government control (e.g., sport and recreation facilities, community events)	There is work underway to develop a Department of Human Services Healthy Food Procurement policy which would require staff across Victoria to make healthier choices when purchasing catering using government funds.
VIC3	Monitoring and intelligence	Implement ongoing monitoring of food environments, including the extent of marketing of unhealthy foods to children, and the nutritional quality of food provided / available in schools and public sector settings (such as hospitals, other government facilities providing food service)	The HEAS collects data on its level of engagement with all setting and the organisations that are working towards or have met Healthy Choices. This is used for monitoring and evaluation and for the development of partnership and engagement strategies to increase reach.

VIC4	Food provision	<p>Improve compliance with the 'School Canteens and Other School Food Services Policy' in all schools (including government, independent and Catholic schools) by extending reporting mechanisms, incentives and support systems</p>	<p>To support healthy eating in schools, the Department of Education and Training's School Canteens and Other School Food Services Policy sets out principles which schools should follow to promote healthy eating, and in particular, addresses food selection, food categories, food safety and the role of school councils in developing a healthy school food service. The Department of Education and Training, however, supports local decision making, and considers that schools are best placed to make decisions that meet the nutritional and health needs of their students.</p> <p>To increase support to schools to implement the DET School Canteens and Other School Food Services policy, the Victorian Government funds the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (as above VIC1). The recent release of <i>FoodChecker</i>, an online menu assessment tool enables schools to instantly assess their canteen and food service menus and to make suitable changes to meet the Victorian School Canteens and Other School Food Service Policy. This online tool compliments a range of other strategies provided through HEAS to support a healthier food supply in schools and other settings. In addition, a Schools Mentorship Program is available to enhance the knowledge, skills, and confidence of health professionals and/or champions supporting schools and build local capacity to meet the policy using a whole-of-school approach.</p> <p>Early childhood services are also supported to meet the National Quality Standards on healthy eating. The HEAS offers free, tailored healthy eating and nutrition advice to help early childhood services develop a healthy eating environment. Long day care services can use HEAS's <i>FoodChecker</i> to help plan their menus in line with the Victorian Menu Planning Guidelines for Long Day Care. Early childhood service can sign up for the Achievement Program, which helps to embed a health promoting service approach and create a healthy learning environment to support the health and wellbeing of Victorian children.</p>
VIC5	Food promotion	<p>Require all organisations, such as community groups and sports clubs, that receive funding from the Victorian Government (including VicHealth) to restrict all promotion (including sponsorship) related to unhealthy food and beverages as a condition of receiving funding</p>	<p>Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV) have embedded the Healthy Choices guidelines in the Better Indoor Stadiums and Community Sport Infrastructure (Better Pools category) Funds. Through these funds, SRV offer up to \$3 million to local council stadium and swimming pool infrastructure projects. Successful applicants are required to demonstrate how Healthy Choices will be implemented in the project through a Healthy Choices implementation plan endorsed by the DHHS. Healthy Choices includes food supply and promotion targets, and states that organisations should not engage in sponsorship, marketing, branding or advertising to children and youth of foods and drinks inconsistent with Healthy Choice. For more information about the Better Indoor Stadiums and Community Sport Infrastructure funds visit: https://sport.vic.gov.au/grants-and-funding/our-grants</p>

			<p>Vichealth have been working with sporting organisations to collect information about the rationale, process, benefits and challenges experiences by adopting a junk food free sponsorship policy. This work will inform next steps taken to reduce junk food sponsorship in sports. Visit https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/search/reducing-junk-food-in-sport-project-building-the-business-case</p>
VIC6 Food retail	<p>Develop guidelines and offer co-ordinated support to local governments on ways to improve the availability of healthy foods in retail settings, and decrease the availability and promotion of unhealthy foods in retail settings</p>	<p>The Healthy Choices policy guidelines (as above VIC1) and implementation support provided through HEAS provide consistent and coordinated support to local government to improve the availability and promotion of healthy food and drinks, at the expense of unhealthy options in retail settings. In 2018, 92% of Victorian local governments have prioritised Healthier eating in their Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plans. Within local government settings, progress in facilitating change through sport and recreation facilities was strengthened by the embedding of Healthy choices guidelines in facility funding grants for indoor stadiums and swimming pools (as above VIC5)</p> <p>In October 2017, the following resolution was passed by the Municipal Association of Victoria State Council meeting, that <i>'the Municipal Association of Victoria State Council reiterates to the State Government the importance of work being undertaken by local and State Government to reduce the consumption of sugar sweetened drinks as a population level intervention to reduce obesity and associated burdens'</i></p> <p>VicHealth's Water in Sport Initiative 2017-20 supports eight local governments to make water the drink of choice in canteens/retail food outlets in local sport and active recreation facilities, including council policy development which could guide future retail food and drink tendering processes https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/waterinsport</p>	
VIC7 Food promotion	<p>Implement policies to restrict the promotion of unhealthy food and beverages in settings controlled or managed by the Victorian Government (e.g., public transport, bus shelters, government-owned billboards, sporting facilities and events)</p>	<p>Implementation of the Healthy Choices guidelines within sport and recreation centres includes food supply and promotion targets, and states that organisations should not engage in sponsorship, marketing, branding or advertising to children and youth of foods and drinks inconsistent with Healthy Choices. A leading example of this in action is the removal of unhealthy food and drink promotion at the Melbourne State Aquatic Centre.</p> <p>Victoria has contributed to the development of a national interim guide for reducing children's exposure to unhealthy food and drink marketing. This guide was endorsed by Ministers at the August 2018 COAG Health Council meeting, noting that the guide is for voluntary use by governments www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au</p>	

VIC8	Governance	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 Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2015-2019 and associated outcomes framework and action plan guides population nutrition activities across government.
VIC9	Food retail	Amend the planning framework to explicitly make health and healthy food environments a priority in state planning, as a way to facilitate local governments limiting the placement / density of unhealthy food outlets while supporting healthy food outlets	Nil
VIC10	Food provision	Demonstrate long-term commitment and increased support for the 'Achievement Program' and the 'Health Eating Advisory Service', which support a wide range of public and private-sector settings to implement healthy food policies	<p>As articulated in Implementing the Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2015-2019: taking action – the first two years, the Victorian Government is committed to increasing access to healthy food and drink in multiple settings through the Healthy Choices guidelines, the Healthy Eating Advisory Service and the Achievement Program (a health promoting framework).</p> <p>https://www.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/implementing-the-victorian-public-health-and-wellbeing-plan-2015-2019</p> <p>Alfred Health is also supporting hospitals and health services to implement prevention initiatives with an emphasis on the increased provision of healthy food and drinks. It collaborates with the HEAS and AP to maximise the uptake of Healthy Choices policy and reduce duplication of effort.</p> <p>The DHHS has undertaken a review and ‘refresh’ of the Achievement Program which includes a continued focus on healthy eating and supporting settings to develop and implement healthy food policies.</p>
VIC11	Support for communities	Integrate practical skills in growing and cooking foods, as well as nutrition information, into the school curriculum across all school years in a way that supports existing teaching priorities	The Victorian Government (through the Department of Health and Human Services) is funding the Playground to Plate Grants Scheme with the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation. The scheme is providing 100 Victorian government primary schools with a one-off \$5,000 infrastructure grant to assist in establishing or enhancing a kitchen garden program. This will enable students to experience fun, hands-on learning through cooking and gardening in order to form positive food habits for life (the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden pleasurable food education philosophy).

		<p>In addition, the Department of Education and Training had funded the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation to expand its program in Victoria through the Pleasurable Food Education Package. Though this investment, the program has expanded to an additional 250 early childhood services, primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>The School Breakfast Clubs Program provides a healthy breakfast for students who may otherwise arrive at school hungry. The Victorian Government, through the Department of Education and Training, has partnered with Foodbank Victoria to deliver free food supplies to 500 of the most disadvantaged government primary schools across Victoria. This initiative is helping to address hunger and disadvantage by providing more than 50,000 free, healthy and nutritious breakfasts per week. The program also has additional benefits for students through informal learning opportunities, including increased knowledge around healthy eating and nutrition.</p>
VIC12 Food retail	Implement and promote incentives or accreditation schemes (potentially based on the 'Achievement Program') for sports and recreation clubs to sell a healthier range of food and beverages whilst limiting availability of unhealthy food and beverages	<p>VicHealth has supported a range of Regional Sports Assemblies, State Sporting Associations, local governments, sports clubs, associations and sport and recreation facilities to promote healthy choices within sports venues by trialling and sport evaluating a range of nudges within the retail environment. This has led to evidence-based recommendation for how healthier choices can be promoted (and decreased promotion of unhealthy choices) in sporting environments whilst still maintaining commercial viability. For examples visit https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/healthy-choice-food</p>
VIC13 Support for communities	Commit to ongoing, long-term support for social marketing campaigns promoting healthy eating, as part of broader efforts to improve population nutrition	<p>In May 2018, the Victorian Government launched a small consumer education campaign to support the introduction of kilojoule menu labelling laws in chain food outlets and support Victorians to eat better when eating out.</p> <p>The 'Kilojoules on the menu: check before you choose' campaign aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Raise awareness that the energy (kilojoule) content of food is now displayed on menus and food tags – Educated consumers about their daily energy (kilojoule) needs, and the kilojoule content of take-away and ready-to-eat foods and drinks – Encourage consumers to use this information to make healthier choices when selecting takeaway and ready-to-eat food and drinks <p>This campaign included paid (radio, social media, shopping centre billboards) and unpaid social media, plus a website with useful tools such as kJ needs calculators, and information on balancing energy intake. Phase 2 of this campaign is being planned for 2018-19.</p> <p>https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/kilojoules-on-the-menu</p>

		VicHealth has invested in a social marketing campaign to promote healthier eating through reduced salt intake since 2016. There is committed investment in Unpack the Salt for 2018 and 2019. www.unpackthesalt.com.au
VIC14 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	Information about Victorian students' health and wellbeing, including perceptions on healthy weight, is currently collected by student self-report in the Victorian Student Health and Wellbeing (About You) Survey, delivered by the Department of Education and Training. Deakin University has partnered with the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health and Human Services, VicHealth, primary care partnerships and health services in Northern Victoria, to trial a whole of community approach to childhood obesity prevention – the Reflexive Evidence and Systems interventions to Prevent Obesity and Non-communicable Diseases (RESPOND). This project will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a suite of physical activity and healthy eating interventions and the impact they have on the prevalence of childhood overweight/obesity. As part of this study, school level direct height and weight measurements will be taken.
VIC15 Food labelling	Extend the proposed implementation of kilojoule menu labelling in fast food chains to apply to more settings (e.g., cinemas) with potential adaptation of the Health Star Rating scheme for menu labelling purposes	The <i>Food Amendment (Kilojoule Labelling Scheme and Other Matters) Act 2017</i> came into effect in Victoria on 1 May 2018 requiring certain large chain food outlets and supermarkets to display kilojoules for unpackaged, ready-to-eat foods/drinks on their menus, and food tags as well as the display the statement 'the average daily adult energy intake is 8,700 kJ'. The scope of the new Victorian laws is broadly consistent with legislation already in place in other states in line with the Forum of Food Regulation Ministers endorsed <i>Principles for Introducing Point-of-Sale Nutrition Information in Standard Food Outlets</i> . With this legislation only just enacted in Victoria it is too early to look at changing or extending the scope of these laws, once the legislation has been in place for a time and there has been the opportunity to observe and evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the kilojoule labelling scheme on Victorian businesses and consumers, future policy responses can be considered.
VIC16 Food retail	Develop and implement programs, including incentives or accreditation schemes, for restaurants, pubs and clubs to improve the healthiness of their menu options, building on the 'Healthy Dining Victoria - Pubs and Clubs' initiative	Nil further progress.
VIC17 Governance	Establish governance structures to improve policy coherence regarding agriculture, food, health, and	Following cross department collaboration between the Department of Health and Human Services and Agriculture Victoria (as part of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources) the Healthy Choices guidelines was incorporated into the Boost your Business Guidelines

	innovation / research and development policies	under the Food innovation Voucher Stream . Businesses were encouraged to consider the guidelines in their applications. Applications showed consideration of the guidelines and projects expected to result in a healthier product were considered favourable during the assessment process.
VIC18 Governance	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)	The Victorian Register of lobbyists is a public online platform that contains information about lobbyists who make representation to government on behalf of their clients. The Victorian Public Sector Commissioner maintains the register.
VIC19 Governance	Improve transparency of political donations by introducing online, real-time declaration of political donations over \$1,000	<p>Victoria will soon have the strictest and most transparent political donation laws in Australia under legislation introduced into the Parliament this year by the Andrews Labor Government. The Electoral Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 will overhaul Victoria’s political donations regime by eliminating large donations and usher in Australia’s most transparent donation disclosure laws to give Victorians increased confidence in political decision making.</p> <p>To assist parties in preparing for the new rigorous compliance regime, administrative funding will commence from 1 July 2018. The remainder of the reforms commence on 25 November 2018, immediately after the State Election. https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/donationreform/</p>

Additional actions/policies/progress related to improving the food environment / obesity prevention / population nutrition (not captured above)	
Action	Details
1. The Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise	The Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise (VHEE) provides a collaborative platform for stakeholder to progress action on three priority areas; increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, decreasing sugar sweetened beverage consumption and improving access to nutritious food. The VHE hosts four roundtable events each year, one strategic leadership roundtables and three implementation and action roundtables. The VHEE has over 300 partners from across the health sector and state.
2. VicHealth – Healthy Eating and Active Living Roundtable	VicHealth established a Healthy Eating and Active Living Roundtable in 2017 with peak health and research organisations in Victoria. This group meets at an executive level quarterly to progress collaboration regarding healthy eating and active living activities in Victoria. No public outcomes to be reported at this point.
3. VicHealth – Salt Reduction Partnership	VicHealth established the Victorian Salt Reduction Partnership in 2014 to coordinate a state-wide initiative aimed at reducing population salt intake. This has included an appropriately resourced program of work that increases public awareness (campaign and media), engages food industry in reformulation efforts, and advocates to the Federal government for a Reformulation Program that sets and monitors salt targets in processed foods.
Notes / comments:	

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