

Health promotion strategies



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In this issue:

Editorial—focus on healthy eating	1
Kids—go for your life	2
Start Right Eat Right goes statewide	2
Community Development Approach to Healthy Eating	3
Smiles 4 Miles for Victoria's preschool children	3
Community Kitchens: Fresh Food, Friendship and Fun	4
Good food: a local alliance	4
Food for All extends its reach	5
Inequalities in healthy eating among women	5
Yarrawonga foodbank responds to changing needs	6
Parents Jury highlights 'smoke and mirrors' advertising	6
Update on Food Access	7
Healthy dining choices for children	7
Healthy Opportunities at Bunurong Community Care	8
Well For Life in Boroondara	8
Healthy schools, healthy kids—insert	
School canteen managers are Nuts on Nutrition	
Fresh Kids—Fresh Fruit, Fresh Water, Fresh Air	
Growing together in Delatite	
Fruit and vegies 'cool' at Port Melbourne Primary School	
Children's Healthy Activities Mentoring Program for Schools	
Healthy Eating Schools Program	
Good Food Great Kids	

Editorial—focus on healthy eating

Welcome to the *Health Promotion Strategies Bulletin*. This bulletin focuses on initiatives aimed at promoting healthy eating and increasing the access to and affordability of nutritious food.

We know that a staggering 90 per cent of Victorians do not eat enough vegetables and 50 per cent do not eat enough fruit¹. There is growing and consistent evidence that, as well as contributing to good nutrition and general health, an adequate consumption of fruit and vegetables protects against debilitating conditions and chronic diseases such as cancer, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke and obesity². Increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables Victorians consume could, therefore, substantially reduce diet-related chronic disease and health care costs. In fact, increasing vegetable and fruit intake in Australia by one serve a day could save \$156.8 million per year on the costs of cardiovascular disease³.

As part of a healthy eating focus, the department is aiming to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, reduce the consumption of high-energy dense foods and drinks, and address supply and access barriers to nutritious and affordable food. We are aware that healthy eating can be quite complex and that many factors affect our eating patterns.

This edition highlights the broad range of innovative and exciting projects within the community promoting healthy eating and access. The articles share the work occurring on the ground with other people and organisations. Another effective way to share information is to post it on the *Go for your life*—professionals website.

As the articles demonstrate, activity within regions allows for local solutions to local issues, however, a long-term vision and a coordinated plan of action is needed.

The department aims to provide the impetus with recent funding of *Kids—go for your life* to promote healthy eating by children and families, and involvement in the broader *Go for your life* strategy. VicHealth also has a major emphasis on promoting 'Food for all'. I hope that you find this edition inspiring.

The February 2006 edition will focus on the role of health promotion in addressing health inequalities. In closing, I'd like to wish all of you best wishes for the festive and holiday period, and I look forward to new challenges and opportunities to advance health promotion in 2006.

Dr Robert Hall
Director Public Health
Chief Health Officer



1 Victorian Population Health Survey

2 Better Health It's Simple, Australian Fruit and Vegetable Coalition

3 Miller M, Eat More Fruit and Vegetable—The case for a Five-year campaign to increase more fruit and vegetable consumption in Australia, August 20th 2002

Kids—go for your life

Kids—go for your life, the new Department of Human Services funded initiative, will use children's settings—such as maternal and child health centres, child care, kindergartens and primary schools—to promote healthy eating and physical activity for children.

Implemented by The Cancer Council Victoria and Diabetes Australia Victoria, Kids—go for your life will provide a plan of action for childhood healthy eating and physical activity promotion across Victoria.

The types of actions and activities that will be conducted in children's settings include:

- fruit-and-vegetable breaks and water-only policies
- regular physical activity breaks and promoting walking to and from schools

- revamping school canteen menus and increasing the number of healthy choices
- incorporating healthy eating, cooking and physical activity lessons into curricula and programs
- working with long day care centres to ensure children receive the right amount of food and appropriate nutrients while at the centre.

Through the website www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au and phone line 133 739 899, Kids—go for your life will provide healthy eating and physical activity information for parents, guardians and professionals.

Kids—go for your life will also create a culture and commitment to local community environments and services

that support healthy lifestyles. Ten local governments will be supported to make physical activity and healthy eating an integral part of their Municipal Early Year Plans and to engage other local organisations in promoting healthy eating and physical activity for children.

Kids—go for your life will bring together existing child nutrition programs run by the Public Health Group, including 'Filling The Gap', 'Start Right Eat Right' and 'Fruit + Veg in Schools'. This will provide an integrated and coordinated approach for the prevention of childhood overweight and obesity.

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Start Right Eat Right goes statewide

Child care centres can have an enormous influence on children's food preferences. They are ideally placed to introduce children to a wide variety of foods, providing a good start in the development of healthy eating patterns.

Start Right Eat Right is an award scheme that recognises best practice in nutrition in long day care centres.

Originally developed in Western Australia, Start Right Eat Right has been modified for long day care centres in Victoria and is being offered statewide as a component of Kids—go for your life. The program is funded by the Department of Human Services for two years and is being managed by Lady Gowrie Child Centre (Melbourne) Inc.

A dietitian from each of the eight Department of Human Services regions provides training to strengthen the capacity of child care professionals to

engage families and provide practical information on children's nutrition.

Training for the first year commenced in November 2005 with centres expected to complete the award by mid-2006. Centres that achieve the award receive public recognition through the media.

Join Start Right Eat Right!

To participate in the award, centres must employ a cook and provide meals and snacks for children. Both the centre director and cook must attend the 1.5 day training session on planning and assessing menus to provide a positive eating environment.

Dietitians and long day care centres wishing to express interest in this valuable program for 2006–2007 can obtain further information from Lady Gowrie Child Centre.

Further information

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Community Development Approach to Healthy Eating

Eating good food and social connectedness seem to go hand in hand. Religious ceremonies from all over the world, the celebration of milestones and rituals as well as the simple invitation to share a meal in friendship are embedded in our culture.

Strategies for education around healthy eating behaviours and practices use this as a basis, and then various creative extensions of it to capitalize on what communities already have as natural social connections around food.

The Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnership (PCP) catchment includes the five major towns of Ararat, Stawell, Avoca, St Arnaud and Beaufort as well as lots of small towns and villages in the two mountain ranges and between them.

One of the priorities articulated in the “Healthy Communities Plan” for 2004–2006 (jointly owned by the Local Governments and other member agencies) is encouraging healthy eating practices.

To make sure we do real work that really changes peoples lives the Grampians Pyrenees PCP has a number of community based projects on the go, which have measurable impacts that build sustainable partnerships into their design.

- “The Lunch Bag Project” is based on sandwich sized paper bags with prompts about what can be put into school lunches on one side and a chart of seasonal fruits and vegetables on the other. They will be distributed to schools and supermarkets and greengrocers and given out at meetings with parents of prep children early next year. Dietitians from the across the catchment have been involved in the design, wording and social marketing.

- “The Mentor Chef” project is being trialed in Willaura. This involves a partnership between the schools, the health service and the community building project. A local “chef” (professional or just a good cook) will show children and other members of the community how to prepare a hearty seasonal meal (salad in summer, vegie soup in winter, a spring vegetable feast and an autumn fruit harvest platter). Our first event will also tie in with the opening of a renovated community centre.
- “From Your Own Backyard” is a message being supported by regular personal anecdotal articles in a community based newsletter and by regular articles in our own monthly newsletter. As an extension of the “Walking School Bus” project, we are also supporting the establishment of community gardens at some schools and the building of a community pizza oven so that children can taste and share their own produce.

Planning is also underway for two community meals programs. One for older people living alone in a small country town, has as partners the bush nursing hospital, the town based health service, the police, the golf club and the primary school mothers club. The other is a partnership with the Islamic community. To learn more about these initiatives please contact Kate Serrurier.

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Smiles 4 Miles for Victoria’s preschool children

Oral disease is the most common preventable disease in childhood with 42 per cent of children entering primary school with experience of dental decay, 75 per cent of which is untreated¹.

Smiles 4 Miles is a public health program designed to *‘put the mouth back in the body’*—placing the responsibility for good oral health within the entire community.

Through the Smiles 4 Miles Health Promoting Preschools, local preschools have been working with their parent groups to develop healthy policy and practices, such as promoting water rather than sweet drinks (‘Drink Well’) and increased fruit and vegetable consumption rather than pre-packaged snacks (‘Eat Well’). These initiatives promote a healthy environment for the children at preschool and encourage change at home.

In 2005, 20 kindergartens across Victoria took part in the pilot program. Nearly 800 families across the initial three pilot sites (Broadmeadows, Corio and Moe/Morwell) now support health promoting policies in their kindergartens. There has been significant decreases in children’s intake of sweet drinks (‘Drink Well’) and increases in fruit and vegetable consumption (‘Eat Well’) noted across the sites. Following early successes, the program will be extended to a further 36 kindergartens in 2006.

Smiles 4 Miles was recently highly commended for a Public Health Award in the Programs category, recognising its valuable contribution in the important area of dental health by promoting healthy eating.

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¹ Dental Health Services Victoria, 2003 (VISDED data)

Community Kitchens: Fresh Food, Friendship and Fun



The Community Kitchens Project, developed by Frankston Community Health Service and with support from Frankston City Council, takes an innovative approach to promoting healthy eating and developing personal skills and social support networks.

Community Kitchens provides opportunities for people from similar backgrounds to get together, cook and enjoy delicious, affordable and nutritious meals with new friends. To limit the need for ongoing funding support and break down barriers to participation, Community

Kitchens uses existing kitchens in community facilities, obtains equipment through donations, assists with transporting participants, and subsidises meal costs for some target groups.

Evaluation so far has shown promising results:

- 86 per cent of participants noted an improvement in cooking skills
- 45 per cent reported being more motivated to prepare healthy meals
- 50 per cent reported a significant reduction in the money spent on 'non-nutritious foods' and an increase in the number of meals made at home.

The social benefits of Community Kitchens are also evident—93 per cent of participants stated that meeting new people was the most valuable part of participating, and 60 per cent showed improved levels of self-confidence.

In addition, 40 per cent of participants stated that their physical and mental health had improved.

This exciting concept was introduced in Frankston after nutritionist, Jenny Trezise, was awarded a fellowship by the Department of Human Services and Victorian Quality Council in 2003 to travel to Canada to research the development of Community Kitchens.

Other groups interested in setting up Community Kitchens will benefit from the Frankston experience. Workshops and presentations are being conducted and a promotional DVD and 'how to manual' have been created.

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Good food: a local alliance

Darebin and Banyule councils are working together to address food affordability, accessibility and healthy eating across their municipalities, particularly in areas with high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage and at high risk of food insecurity.¹

The councils have adopted interventions from The NSW Centre for Public Health's *Food Security Options Paper*². In particular, a food policy coalition, or alliance, has been established to provide an umbrella for other interventions. As the *Options Paper* recognises: 'food policy coalitions are potentially one of the most powerful interventions to improve a local food supply'.

The Banyule and Darebin Good Food Alliance meets six-weekly. Members

include council staff and workers from community health, local agencies, neighbourhood houses and primary schools, as well as local residents.

The alliance shares information, discusses new approaches, reviews local initiatives and hosts guest speakers. The councils focus on supporting the alliance and addressing food accessibility, while local community health centres are prioritising healthy eating initiatives³.

Initiatives implemented in 2005 included research on barriers to fresh food purchasing and gardening in areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage; establishment of a community gardens network; and support for the St Vincent's Low Cost Supermarket in West Heidelberg.

Future activities will focus on addressing transport limitations and building culturally appropriate local food cooperatives.

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1 Cox, M & Ballinger M (1999). *Darebin Food Insecurity Project Final Report*, Darebin Community Health.

2 NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition (2003). *Food Security Options Paper*, NSW Dept of Health. Available from the publications page at the National Public Health Partnerships website: http://www.nphp.gov.au/publications/a_z.htm

3 Garrard, J, et al. (2004). *Planning for Healthy Communities*, Victorian Dept of Human Services.

Healthy schools, healthy kids



School canteen managers are Nuts on Nutrition

Thanks to the Nuts on Nutrition Program, making changes to school canteen menus is no longer a lonely and difficult task for the school canteen manager or volunteer parent committee.

The South Coast Health Services Consortium PCP (SCHSC) established the Nuts on Nutrition Canteen Manager's Network after two forums in 2004 indicated a need for information sharing. Thirty-six participants representing 15 schools attended the forums to listen to experts speak on child nutrition and nutrition choices for schools, stories of change in local schools, making profits from healthy food and food safety issues. Participants' comments included: *'We need a network to share information and resources and to hear updated information on what is available to school canteens.'* *'I am going back to start making the changes straight away'*, *'Listening to the innovative ideas used in other schools has made the whole prospect of change an easier option.'*



Marg Middleton, Tim Howard, Mooch Shaw and Cheryl Routley compare notes on secondary school canteens.



Canteen staff comparing food labelling.

Two Nuts on Nutrition Network meetings have been held, with topics including how to market healthy choices in the school canteen and food labelling identification. Jodie, canteen manager and parent from Poowong Primary School said, *'Product suppliers often market food as healthy, whether they are healthy or not and we don't know what are the right ones to choose'*. Mary Lawry, a local dietitian, assisted the canteen staff to identify healthier choices based on reading food labels.

Participants offered the following comments on the network meetings: *'It was great to get together with other canteen staff to talk things over, we never get the chance to talk to others, we so often work on our own with this.'*

Through the Nuts on Nutrition forums and the network meetings, all schools involved have made some change to the school canteen menu.

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Fresh Kids—Fresh Fruit, Fresh Water, Fresh Air

The Fresh Kids program encourages more than 10,000 primary school students in Melbourne's western suburbs to enjoy fruit and vegetables every day, drink plenty of water and be active every day.

The Western Region Health Centre in partnership with the Maribyrnong City Council, Victorian Fruit Wholesalers, Hobson's Bay and Wyndham ISIS and 35 primary schools, runs Fresh Kids. The Telstra Foundation has supported the Fresh Kids program since December 2003.

Under the program, students enjoy a piece of fruit during a 'Fruit Break' in every morning during class. Schools also allow children to drink from water bottles during class and have 10-minute physical activity breaks immediately before recess or lunch. Pupils at Fresh Kids schools receive free fruit for up to four 'Fruit Weeks' during school terms. Schools are encouraged to develop healthy eating and physical activity policies. They provide nutrition information to parents through the school newsletter and on-demand education sessions run by the Western Region Health Centre's bilingual nutrition educators.

In 2001, before the program was implemented, a needs assessment at two pilot schools found that fewer than 17 per cent of children had fruit for lunch; no children had vegetables for lunch; only 24 per cent drank plain water and 38 per cent of students ate high fat hot food from the canteen.

Throughout the program, two Maribyrnong schools monitored the change in children's fruit and water consumption during the school day. These schools

witnessed a dramatic change—60 per cent of children now bring fruit into class on a daily basis and up to 90 per cent of children now regularly drink plain water. Even more pleasing is these changes in eating behaviour appear to be long lasting once school policies have been implemented.

Fresh Kids will work with researchers from Deakin University to further develop the physical activity component of the program.

Working collaboratively, the Fresh Kids program is creating supportive school environments that promote healthy living.

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Growing together in Delatite

Research by Delatite Community Health Service found that local children were not eating recommended servings of vegetables. There was also a belief that this could be linked to a lack of social connectedness between younger and older generations, so that knowledge and skills associated with vegetable growing, harvesting and cooking were not being passed on to children.

The Growing Together Project is a collaborative health promotion initiative involving Delatite Community Health Service, Benalla West Primary School, Cooina Retirement Village, the Benalla Garden Club, Rotary Club of Benalla, and local businesses and individuals.

As part of the project, Benalla West Primary School children visit Cooina Retirement Village each fortnight to work with residents in planting, maintaining and harvesting produce. On alternate weeks, the children prepare, cook and taste vegetable-based recipes, sharing their skills with parents and the school community.

While promoting healthy eating amongst families, the Growing Together Project is also having wider benefits.

For Cooina residents, the vegetable garden provides an opportunity to socialise, exercise, grow fresh produce, maintain an interest in healthy eating and enjoyment of food, connect with their past, and to pass on their valued knowledge to future generations.

The children are able to share in growing, harvesting, preparing and eating of fresh vegetables, and to take home skills, involving their extended families. They are also enjoying the therapeutic value of vegetable gardens—the children are learning to work cooperatively and to feel good about their achievements. They are also benefiting through improved self-esteem and self-confidence.

The ultimate aim is that the children will influence their families to eat and enjoy vegetables in new and interesting ways.

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Fruit and vegies ‘cool’ at Port Melbourne Primary School

The Port Melbourne Childhood Nutrition Project has increased access to fruit and vegetables for children attending Port Melbourne Primary School and raised awareness of the benefits of healthy eating within the school community.

Many children attending the school come from socioeconomically disadvantaged families who experience multiple barriers to accessing nutritious foods. Some parents who responded to a questionnaire reported that their children did not eat enough fruit and vegetables due to financial difficulties, limited transport or inadequate time. Twenty-three per cent of respondents said that in the last 12 months they had run out of food and not had enough money to buy more. As identified in the City of Port Phillip *Food Security Report*, Port Melbourne is an area at risk of ‘food insecurity’ due to the limited number of affordable fresh food outlets, lack of local food production,

limited public transport to shops, and high levels of gentrification in the area.

In collaboration with the school community, the Childhood Nutrition Project developed a comprehensive program to increase access to and awareness of fruit and vegetables and create a supportive environment for healthy eating.

A number of strategies were developed. Fruit and vegetables were made available at all school activities and events, salad and fruit have become an integral part of the lunch order list, a local fruit retailer ‘Eat More Fruit’ donated two boxes of fruit each week to provide fruit during fruit break in class, and a vegetable garden is involving children in growing, preparing and eating fresh fruit and vegetables at school.

Increased awareness of fruit and vegetables has been achieved through fun

and engaging activities, integration of nutrition education in class, and involving community groups and services in supporting and promoting healthy eating. Healthy eating has also been incorporated in a monthly community-building event at a public housing estate, where many families from Port Melbourne Primary School live.

The outcomes of the project include a 20 per cent increase in fruit and 5 per cent increase in vegetables being brought in the lunchbox and eaten at school; 70 per cent of children say they are eating more fruit and vegetables at home and at school than this time last year, and 90 per cent of children are enjoying it!

Further information

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Children’s Healthy Activities Mentoring Program for Schools

CHAMPS—Children’s Healthy Activities Mentoring Program for Schools—is an innovative program developed in collaboration with Beechworth Primary School’s Grade 5 & 6 students to support students in developing healthy lifestyle goals. CHAMPS empowers students to mentor sustainable lifestyle change within the school community, and supports them to identify future health promotion activities within the school community.

The program held over a term, beginning with a professional development session to update teachers about the incidence, causes and impact of childhood obesity and what schools and families can do to support healthy lifestyles.

Six student information sessions explored holistic health, changes in our lifestyle, why we eat, and a lunch box and physical activity audit, amongst other activities.

Students then presented their projects and audit results as part of a parent information session. Parent evaluations reflected a strong appreciation of the students driving the process and their commitment to supporting healthy lifestyles within their families.

A manual has been produced, outlining the activities the school is implementing to support holistic health and the development of healthy lifestyle habits. The manual includes project activities, lesson plans and resources, program tools and evaluations. It also contains background information, suggested websites, the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, information pamphlets, and a disk with PowerPoint presentations used as part of the program.

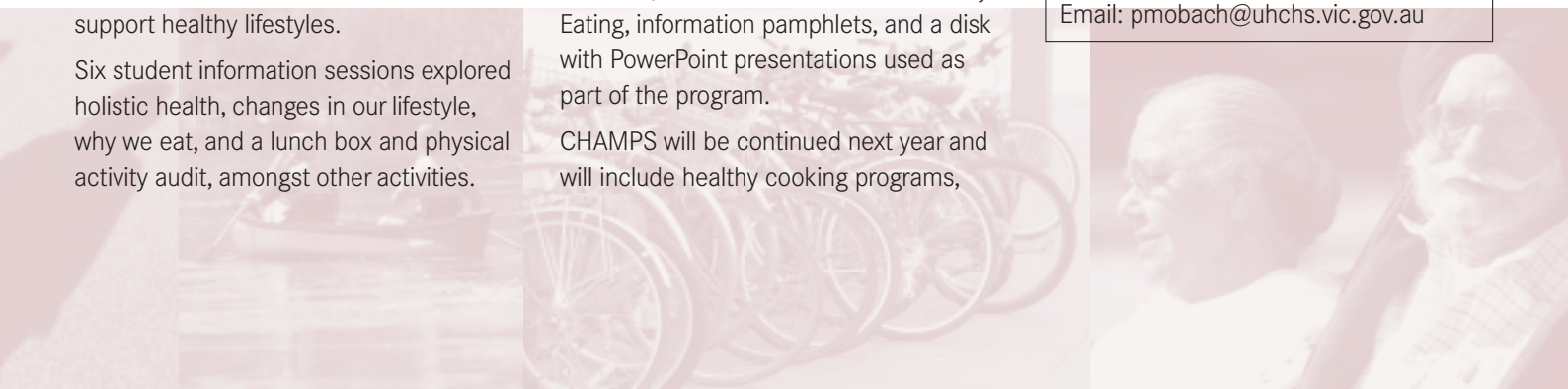
CHAMPS will be continued next year and will include healthy cooking programs,

development of a recipe book and health information pamphlets that students can disseminate throughout the school.

The Healthy Lifestyles Action Team, which includes Upper Hume Community Service, Wodonga Regional Health Service, Beechworth Health Service, Chiltern Health Service and Glenview Community Care, will further develop the CHAMPS manual and introduce the program to regional primary schools.

Further information

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Healthy Eating Schools Program

Nutrition Australia Victorian Division has been working with 52 Victorian primary schools, as part of the Healthy Eating Schools program, to assist them to develop a nutrition action plan.

The main focus is to assist and support schools in developing a Nutrition Action Plan. An Action Plan Manual guides each school through a step-by-step process, providing advice on forming a nutrition committee, using the needs assessment checklist and developing a nutrition action plan. Nutrition Australia provides feedback to schools to ensure their Action Plan is practical and sustainable. Each school was also provided with a food service manual, healthy fundraising ideas manual, school newsletter nutrition inserts, CD and teachers' resource guide.

Nutrition Australia also assists schools in implementing their plans. Email and phone assistance is available as well as additional resources and nutrition workshops aimed at parents, canteen managers, teachers and staff.

To ensure sustainability of the schools' nutrition policy and health promoting activities, the school receives accreditation as a *Healthy Eating School*.

More than half of the schools involved in the program have submitted action plans and are well on their way to becoming a *Healthy Eating School*. Successful initiatives have included healthy changes to canteen menus, planning and implementing fruit and water breaks, Nutrition Week events and establishing

vegetable patches. One school has translated healthy lunchbox information into different languages.

The program has also been adapted for 30 Northern Territory primary schools, to be initiated in late 2005.

For further information regarding *Healthy Eating Schools* resources, visit www.nutritionaustralia.org and click 'On the Bookshelf'.

Further information

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Good Food Great Kids

Yarra Valley's Good Food Great Kids project is improving the nutrition of Indigenous families through projects that build skills, knowledge and resources for healthy eating.

Initiated by the Yarra Valley Community Health Service, in partnership with the local Indigenous community, Good Food Great Kids responds to a needs assessment, which revealed that poor nutrition contributes to the compromised health of the Indigenous people of Healesville. The project was funded by the Commonwealth Government through the National Child Nutrition Program and involved health service workers and Indigenous workers, the Indigenous community and elders, and local schools.

The project's objectives include increasing the use of healthier food within Indigenous families, creating opportunities for Indigenous children and families to grow fresh vegetables, fruit and native plant foods, and improve the nutritional intake of Indigenous primary school children.

To achieve these objectives a range of projects were undertaken.

The 'Spend Wisely' program provided budgeting, shopping, cooking, financial and healthy eating advice to a small number of Indigenous families.

The monthly 'Wise Women's Circle' brought Indigenous women together to discuss healthy food and cooking. These women are now advocates on healthy eating.

'She [Indigenous Nutrition Support Worker] is really important to have on board as she is one of us.' Community Member

The community garden project involved a project worker and an Indigenous garden worker, the local secondary school and tertiary education program, and the wider Indigenous community. As a result of their efforts, Yarra Valley's Indigenous community now has its own thriving vegetable and herb garden, fruit trees and Indigenous native plants (bush-tucker).

Nutrition programs in two schools are changing the curriculum, school environment and policies to support healthy food choices. An education program, 'Down to Earth', was developed

based on gardening, healthy eating and Indigenous culture. Kitchen gardens were established in the schools, canteen menus and policies were reviewed and healthy changes made, nutrition workshops were held for staff, and food and nutrition policies were drafted.

Doseena Fergie, from Yarra Valley Community Health Service believes the project has sowed the seeds of ongoing interest in healthy lifestyles. *'The community is more aware of nutrition and good health and is interested in buying and cooking healthy food,'* she said. *'The legacy from this project will be visible for years through the community garden, the cooking program, local schools, and within the Indigenous Health Service.'*

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Food for All extends its reach

In the last few years there has been growing concern for the number of Australians who are overweight and obese. However, few people are aware that an increasing number of Australians are not regularly able to eat nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate food from non-emergency sources. Internationally, this situation is known as food insecurity.¹

The 1995 National Nutritional Survey reported that 5 per cent of people surveyed answered yes to the question *“In the last 12 months, were there any times that you ran out of food and you couldn’t afford to buy anymore?”*. In 2002, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that 60,000 low-income workers experienced food insecurity.³

Studies have shown that people are more at risk of food insecurity if they are on low incomes and with a disability, or single parents with young children, or people who are chronically ill, Indigenous people, refugees or asylum seekers. They are more likely to live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with limited public transport, abundance of fast food stores and no fruit and vegetable outlets. They are likely to consume more energy dense food such as fried and sweet food to satisfy hunger and eat less fruit and vegetables. They are also more likely to skip a meal or go without food to pay rent or utilities and be most likely to be overweight and obese, in particular women.

While nutrition strategies have tended to focus on changing the eating behaviours of individuals, families or groups, few strategies have aimed to improve the environment that people with low incomes are living in, such as increasing integrated public transport and the availability of fruit and vegetable outlets in neighbourhoods.

VicHealth’s Food for All program recognises that local government authorities have an important role in

promoting the health of their communities. They know their communities well and have the capacity to take on a leadership role to reduce barriers to food access. Through the five-year Food for All program, VicHealth supports local government authorities, which have more than 20 per cent of their population living in disadvantaged areas. They assist them to implement strategies that reduce infrastructure barriers to a variety of food for healthy eating.

The eight local government authorities funded under Food for All are Brimbank,

Dandenong, Frankston, Maribyrnong, Cardinia/Casey, Melton, Swan Hill and Wodonga. Also supporting the Food for All program were the free one-day Leading the Way: Integrated Planning courses, implemented in the eight regions, and the Food Security Network, auspiced by the Victorian Local Governance Association.

Further information

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Inequalities in healthy eating among women

People who have low levels of education, low status occupations, are on low incomes, or live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are at increased risk of consuming diets that do not meet dietary guidelines. Very little is known about the reasons for this increased risk.

The SocioEconomic Status and Activity in Women study, funded by the National Heart Foundation and Deakin University, confirmed that women of low socioeconomic status have poorer diets, including lower intakes of fruits and vegetables, than those of higher socioeconomic status.

The research involved surveying more than 2,000 women from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and investigation of the healthy eating opportunities in the environments where women live. Innovative technologies were used to analyse data from ‘audits’ of women’s neighbourhood environments (for example, the availability and accessibility of food stores), and how these characteristics were related to eating behaviours.

The findings identify that personal factors, such as knowledge and health considerations, and social factors, such as support from family and friends, partly explain why women of low socioeconomic status have less healthy eating behaviours. The availability of supermarkets and fruit and vegetable stores was not as critical in contributing to socioeconomic inequalities in fruit and vegetable intakes, although it may be that the accessibility of these outlets is more important. Mapping and investigations of food access are continuing.

This study will provide insights into the roles of personal, social and environmental factors in women’s healthy eating. This knowledge is important in informing the development of policies and programs to promote healthy eating among those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

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1 Adapted from the Community Food Security Coalition (1995), “Community Food Security Empowerment Act: Venice, California.

2 Wood B. et. al (2000), “1995 national Nutrition Survey, All persons 16 years of Age and over and all Persons 16 years and Over by food security”. Monash University. <http://www.healthy eating.org>

3 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002) catalogue no. 4159, unpublished data.

Yarrawonga foodbank responds to changing needs

When the meat works in Yarrawonga closed in 1998, the effects were widespread. Fifty people lost their jobs, affecting 80 families directly as well as the whole community, which relied on the spending of those workers.

The impact was felt strongly at the Community Health Centre (CHC) in Yarrawonga, which was called on to assist some of these families. In response,

the CHC talked to stakeholders and community members and organisations to develop a flexible welfare support program.

A Foodbank was considered the best way to provide financial relief, addressing the immediate financial burden of providing food for the family. To establish and operate the Foodbank, a number of processes were instituted. The CHC set up a foodbank committee comprising 20 volunteers and the

CHC Social Welfare Officer. The committee learnt how to operate a food distribution unit, obtained the equipment to store food safely, obtained a Food Premises Permit from the local shire, located a premise to operate in, and recruited and trained volunteers to operate the program. Monthly meetings were held to discuss progress, promoting a community-owned approach.

Since 1998, more than 4,500 adults and 4,500 children have been served by the Yarrawonga Foodbank. This equates to 182,000 meals. Two new foodbanks have been seeded in Albury and Cobram and other towns serviced through the development of a food transport vehicle.

The program has adapted to community need by developing partnerships with local and regional businesses, Moira Shire and service groups such as Rotary and Lions Clubs and Clubs NSW. Community support has been strengthened by establishing an auxiliary to raise funds. Partnerships with local schools to provide food for breakfast programs and with the CHC dietitian to provide healthy eating on a budget programs have broadened the program to provide a preventative health promotion focus.

A refrigerated van has been purchased, which has provided the program with donations of food from across the region. Each month, on average, \$10,290 worth of food is collected and distributed to outlets in Shepparton, Cobram, Yarrawonga and Albury. For every \$100 of running costs, the van collects \$7,500 worth of food.

Other communities are now benefiting from using the foodbank model and strengthening their own responses to the challenges of meeting the needs of their communities.

Parents Jury highlights 'smoke and mirrors' advertising

The Parents Jury, a web-based network of parents who want to improve food and physical activity environments for children in Australia, recently generated media interest in Kellogg's marketing campaign to advertise its popular Coco Pops cereal.

In June 2005, the Parents Jury voted Coco Pops the winner of the 'smoke and mirrors' award in the 2005 Children's TV Food Advertising Awards. The award was given because parents felt strongly that Kellogg's was not disclosing the true nutritional content of the product, and instead portraying the cereal as 'healthy'.

Coco Pops contain 36.5 per cent sugar and only 1.2 per cent dietary fibre. Australian nutrition guidelines state that a healthy breakfast should include a wholegrain cereal that is low in fat and sugar and high in dietary fibre¹.

The Parents Jury wrote to Kellogg's asking them to take their social responsibility towards children seriously and to stop using misleading marketing tactics. Kellogg's did not reply and continued their marketing campaign with the launch of a new advertisement.

The Parents Jury took the story to the media to publicise the misleading nature of the company's advertising strategy.

Supported by Diabetes Australia—Vic, The Cancer Council Australia, the Australasian Society for the Study of Obesity and

VicHealth, the Parents Jury gives parents a forum to voice their views and collectively advocate to improve children's food and physical activity environments.

Australian children are exposed to more food advertisements per hour than children in any other country of the world. Over 75 per cent of these advertisements are for junk food products that are high in fat and sugar and low in essential micronutrients. Experts believe that children's exposure to junk food advertisements is directly related to their food choices.²

Nearly one third of Australian children are either overweight or obese, and this number is growing at an alarming rate of almost 1 per cent each year. Many suffer from social isolation, poor self-esteem and depression. Overweight and obese children also have a high risk (80 per cent) of becoming overweight or obese adults. Potential complications then become very serious and include diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer.²

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1 *Dietary Guidelines for Australians, A guide to healthy eating*, <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/nhome.htm>

2 *Children's Health or Corporate Wealth? The case for banning food advertising to children*, Coalition on Food Advertising to Children (CFAC), November 2003.

Update on Food Access

Food is a human right (Universal Declaration of Human Rights UN 1948)¹. In a civilised society, we expect people to be able to easily acquire healthy, affordable, safe and culturally appropriate food.

The determinants of good food access include economic means, local availability and cost of healthy food, the physical ability to get to and from food shops with an adequate amount of food, and the availability of foods that are culturally and socially appropriate. Food access is about money, the food market, urban planning and transport.

What are markers of an urban environment with good food access? Mapping gives a comprehensive and easily understood accessibility indicator. Donkin² suggests a circle of 500 metres radius be drawn around each major/multiple shop to represent a maximum reasonable walking distance. When applying advanced mapping techniques to the City of Casey, it was found that 80 per cent of the population was within an eight-minute car journey to healthy, cheap food. However, only half of those relying on bus transport had the same access and only 4 per cent could make it by foot³.

Another indicator of food access is the availability and cost of local food. A study in south west Victoria found that rural consumers can purchase some basic foods locally; however, a complete healthy diet can only be purchased at a cheap price if the consumer has easy access to a large supermarket⁴.

A UK study indicated that shop type is the best predictor of price and availability of an adequate diet.⁵ In this study, prices were lowest in large supermarkets, which were found mostly in more deprived areas, and although food prices were lower in poorer areas, high fat, high sugar foods were the cheapest. Australian studies⁶ have found minimal or no socioeconomic status differences in the availability of fruit and vegetables. The most recent and comprehensive food access study, carried out in Newcastle UK, found that poor

access to healthy food exists for a minority of people who do not or cannot shop outside their immediate locality.⁷

Another consideration is the mixture of local food shops. In a Melbourne-wide study, Reidpath⁸ found that disadvantaged neighbourhoods have significantly more fast food chain outlets per head populations.

How can we reconcile all these findings? In summary, it can be assumed that if individuals have good access to a major supermarket by car, bus or foot, they will have good food access. It cannot be assumed that poor neighbourhoods have poor food access. The mixture of local

shops is also an important indicator of food access. The best advice is for communities to look at local food access. Mapping provides the useful first step in making a comprehensive assessment of local food access and identifying populations at risk.

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Healthy dining choices for children

Childhood obesity is emerging as one of Victorian's most serious health problems. In 2001, one in five Victorian children aged 5–6 years were overweight or obese, and 23 per cent of children aged 10–12 were overweight or obese. Overweight children become overweight adults, which can contribute to heart disease.

Paying attention to what children eat is an important preventative measure that parents can take. This can be difficult when eating out with children as a common children's menu includes items such as chicken nuggets and chips, fish and chips, pizza and chips, and hot dog and chips.

Hobsons Bay Council will be promoting the Healthy Choices for Children program to cafes, restaurants, bistros and other dining venues, encouraging them to serve healthy food options to young children.

The aim of Healthy Choices for Children is to develop healthy eating habits for children and promoting health and prevention of diet-related diseases, which may occur later in life.

Strategies to achieve this include:

- promoting healthy menu options to businesses that provide food to children
- developing a nutrition program and targeting businesses that offer food to children in a sit down environment
- conducting a forum and providing food business operators with skills to design healthy menu options for children
- rewarding participating food business operators with an award and a sticker to display on their shop window.

This program expects to generate benefits for parents, children and businesses. Children will be assisted to develop healthy eating habits for a lifetime. Businesses that meet the criteria for the *Healthy Choices for Children Award*, will be rewarded and promoted through local media and Council's newsletters and website.

A survey in July 2006 will evaluate the program and consider encouraging other premises to adopt a similar program.

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Healthy Opportunities at Bunurong Community Care

Southern Health recognises the importance of employees' health and wellbeing in the delivery of high quality services that improve the health status of the community. The better the health of employees, the better they will perform, allowing greater ability to deliver on Southern Health's Vision and strategic intent.

Healthy Opportunities, Southern Health's unique integrated employee and organisational health initiative, is being put into action at Bunurong Community Care. The staff decided a little less conversation about diet and a little more action was needed. Every week staff contribute \$5 and once a week two colleagues go to

Dandenong Market to buy fresh salads, vegetables and fruit for lunches. Through word of mouth, the initial group of five has now grown to 16!

'The delicious food has helped me lose 3 kg since joining the healthy eating group.'

A dietitian has been engaged on two occasions to join staff at lunchtime and talk about healthy choices and food labelling. A Healthy Options noticeboard in the staff lunch room features low fat recipes and ideas that people contribute about healthy food choices.

These initiatives have not only helped people improve their health, they have also contributed to building a positive team environment.

Further information

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Well For Life in Boroondara

Nutrition and physical activity are key factors in maintaining our wellbeing.

Well for Life aims to improve the health, independence and wellbeing of frail older people—those living in aged care facilities and those who live at home and participate in Home and Community Care Planned Activity Groups (PAGs).

The Well for Life package of information, resources and training supports aged care staff to increase nutrition and physical activity opportunities for older aged care residents and frail older people who live at home.

The City of Boroondara Well for life program is an initiative of the Victorian Department of Human Services Public Health and Aged Care branches. A dietitian from Inner East Community Health Service (IECHS) managed this 12-month project, which involved 14 PAGs and one state funded nursing home.

Strategies to improve nutrition and activity included 21 nutrition talks reaching 326 clients, 21 carers, 87 staff and four volunteers; 75 clients at risk of malnutrition were given samples of high energy high protein supplements; cooking classes were held at two PAGs; a kitchen garden was established at one PAG; the YMCA was involved in conducting exercise classes with 13 PAGs; and new exercise games were introduced at four PAGs.

Evaluation surveys indicated that that all of the PAGs and the YMCA benefited greatly from Well for Life and were keen to continue working with IECHS after the project finished.

Further information

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Public Health Awards Congratulations!

Winner for Excellence:

Be Active Eat Well—Colac Area Health

Winner for Innovation:

Taste 4 Health—Glen Eira City Council, Public Health Unit

Highly Commended:

The Well for Life Initiative—Program Evaluation Unit, The University of Melbourne

Further details about the Public Health Awards are available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/publichealthawards/phap05.htm>

About this Publication

Editorial Committee

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The next edition (February 2006) will focus on equity in health promotion practice and the role of health promotion in addressing health inequalities. Contributions for the next edition are most welcome, the deadline for articles is 3 February 2006.

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