



Policies for tackling obesity and creating healthier food environments

**2019 progress update
Western Australian
Government**

March 2019

Further details available at
www.foodpolicyindex.org.au

**WA
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 Western Australian Government (July 2016 – December 2018) in relation to the recommended policies identified in the 2017 report.

Key areas in which the Western Australian Government has made progress



Hosting the WA Preventive Health Summit to encourage broader thinking and community engagement about ways to foster healthy lifestyles among Western Australians



Actively evaluating the implementation of Healthy Options WA: Food and Nutrition Policy for WA Health Services and Facilities, and using this evaluation to inform future iterations of the policy



Banning the advertisement of alcohol on public transport, including train infrastructure, digital billboards and buses



Recommended action areas for the Western Australian Government

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



Food promotion: Mandate the removal of unhealthy food and drink advertising from state assets



Food provision: Eliminate the sale of unhealthy food and drinks in WA hospitals and other state-owned institutions



Food provision: Introduce healthy food and drink provision policies across WA Government departments and agencies

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.¹

The project was conducted as part of INFORMAS,² 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 Western Australian 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 Western Australian 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

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

¹ 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

² www.informas.org

Actions taken (July 2016 - December 2018) by the Western Australian 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
WA1	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	The Department of Health conducted an audit of WA Health food and drink outlets to measure compliance with the Healthy Options WA: Food and Nutrition Policy for WA Health Services and Facilities. Annual surveys of school principals are conducted which contain a school canteen component. The North Metropolitan Health Service has trialled food environment assessment tools for sport and recreation centres, available to selected local governments. The East Metropolitan Health Service is conducting a Food Outlet Mapping project to support 13 local councils in factoring in public health nutrition risk in planning decisions. In 2017, the Food Access and Costs Survey was conducted again to monitor the availability and cost of healthy food.	Substantive action
WA2	Support for communities	Continue to invest in sustained, high quality state-wide public education campaigns promoting healthy eating, as part of broader efforts to improve population nutrition	The Department of Health continues to fund a range of evidence based, state-wide public education programs for obesity prevention in adults and children. This includes <i>LiveLighter</i> (a comprehensive state-wide healthy lifestyle promotion and education program that encourages healthy eating and active lifestyles) and a range of other education programs.	Substantive action
WA3	Leadership	Develop guidelines to support local governments to implement public health and wellbeing plans under the Public Health Act 2016, and detail how to incorporate policies for creating healthy food environments and improving population nutrition	The Department of Health has developed and uploaded a practical, web-based resource to provide guidance to local governments on creating healthy food environments. In March 2018, the Department of Health published the 'Public Health Planning Guide for Local Government' which provides guidance on how to meet the requirements of public health planning within in the Public Health Act 2016. They have also developed a searchable inventory of local government health promotion programs/initiatives in each area, and have undertaken a range of initiatives to support local governments in this area.	Substantive action
WA4	Food promotion	Implement policies to restrict the promotion of unhealthy food and beverages in settings controlled or managed by the Western Australian Government	In 2018, the WA government announced a ban on alcohol advertising on public transport, starting with trains/train stations. The WA Preventative Health Summit (held in March 2018) identified the removal of unhealthy food and drinks promotions from state-owned assets as a key area for action. VenuesWest has begun piloting implementation of healthy food and drink policies in selected government-owned and self-managed sports venues.	Some action
WA5	Food provision	Establish a whole-of-government policy on healthy food procurement and provision across all WA Government departments and settings	A key priority from the WA Preventative Health Summit was to introduce healthy food policies across WA Government Departments and agencies. Following the Summit, the WA Minister for Health requested that audits be conducted across WA health services and facilities to improve compliance with the Healthy Options WA Policy. Results of these audits will help to inform a review and strengthening of the Policy in 2019.	Some action
WA6	Food promotion	Require all organisations that receive funding from the WA Government to restrict all promotion (including sponsorship) related to unhealthy food and beverages as a condition of receiving funding (use Healthway co-sponsorship policy or 'WA Health Sponsorship Policy' as a model)	The Healthway co-sponsorship model is still in place. Healthway has engaged with the WA School Canteen Association to support the enforcement of healthy food and beverage provision at Healthway-funded programs and events since 2013. Healthway has begun preliminary work with Lotterywest to support the development and implementation of a "Healthy Event Guidelines" so that Lotterywest funded events can provide healthy food and beverage options, and limit availability and promotion of unhealthy food and beverage products.	Some action

WA7	Food provision	Improve awareness and compliance with the 'School Healthy Food and Drink Policy' in all schools by extending reporting mechanisms, incentives and support systems	The Department of Health continues to fund the WA School Canteen Association to support public schools to implement the Healthy Food and Drink Policy. The Department of Health also funds Foodbank WA to deliver the School Breakfast and Nutrition Education Program which complements implementation of the Policy by providing children from low socio-economic backgrounds with access to healthy food and nutrition education.	Some action
WA8	Food labelling	Implement mandatory nutrition labelling on menus at food service outlets, in line with regulations in other States / Territories	The Department of Health is currently investigating the feasibility of including kilojoule labelling on menus in quick service food outlets.	Some action
WA9	Food retail	Amend the planning framework to explicitly make 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	The Department of Health submitted a policy response to a green paper (May 2018) " <i>Proposals for modernising the planning system</i> ", highlighting the changes to the WA planning system required to ensure health is a relevant consideration. The <i>WA Preventive Health Summit</i> identified amending planning regulations to prioritise considerations of community health and wellbeing, and supporting local governments to develop healthy food environment / population nutrition plans as areas for action.	Some action
WA10	Support for communities	Put in place overarching state-wide structures and resources for supporting healthy food environments at the community level across multiple settings	Healthway is currently supporting the WA School Canteen Association (WASCA) to develop and deliver the <i>Fuel to Go</i> and <i>Play</i> project to support child play centres to improve the healthiness of food provision and support for communities in this area. Healthway also continues to support the <i>Crunch&Sip</i> initiative in schools. There is no state-wide structure in place to support communities to co-ordinate comprehensive local-level interventions.	Some action
WA11	Governance	Establish governance structures to improve policy coherence regarding agriculture, food, health, and innovation / research and development policies	The Department of Health is mapping wider public sector agency policies and programs that align with the obesity / chronic disease prevention agenda more broadly. The Directorate is identifying several areas where policy priorities intersect and opportunities for further collaboration / partnerships.	Some action
WA12	Food provision	Continue to invest in state-wide initiatives that support workplaces to make cultural, environmental and policy changes promoting positive lifestyle behaviours amongst employees	The Department of Health continues to invest in the Healthier Workplace WA program. This program provides a number of free services to support workplaces state-wide to make cultural, environmental and policy changes that support and encourage positive lifestyle behaviours amongst employees.	Substantive action
WA13	Food retail	Develop and implement programs to incentivise sports and recreation clubs to sell healthier foods and beverages whilst limiting unhealthy food and beverages	South Metropolitan Health Service provides support to increase the availability of healthier foods and beverages, including a small grants scheme for sporting clubs in the region. East Metropolitan Health Service is working with Healthway and the WA Canteen Association to increase the availability of healthy options across all Little Athletics Clubs in the region.	Some action
WA14	Governance	Strengthen the requirements for health impact assessments to include explicit consideration of potential impacts of policies on population nutrition and health	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action
WA15	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	All children enrolled in WA primary schools are offered height, weight, BMI assessment. In WA, secondary school child measurement is available upon request. It is not undertaken on a universal basis.	Limited action
WA16	Governance	Improve transparency of political donations by introducing online, real-time declaration of political donations over \$1,000	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action
WA17	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

Acknowledgements

This project was conducted by researchers within the Global Obesity Centre, a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention within the Institute for Health Transformation at Deakin University, in conjunction with the Obesity Policy Coalition.

Funding for this project has been provided from the Australian Government's Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). The MRFF provides funding to support health and medical research and innovation, with the objective of improving the health and wellbeing of Australians. MRFF funding has been provided to The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre under the Boosting Preventative Health Research Program. Further information on the MRFF is available at www.health.gov.au/mrff. Gary Sacks is the recipient of an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DE160100307) and a Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellowship from the National Heart Foundation of Australia.

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.

We would like to thank all of the Western Australian Government officials that contributed their time and expertise to this report.

The contents of this published material are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not reflect the views of the funding partners.

Cite this report as: Sacks G, Robinson E for the Food-EPI Australia project team. Policies for tackling obesity and creating healthier food environments: 2019 Progress update, Western Australian Government. Melbourne: Deakin University, 2019.

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

