

Healthy choices: policy directive for Victorian public health services overview

Health services

The Policy directive strengthens Victorian public health services as places that support the health and wellbeing of their staff and visitors.

It requires services to ensure that healthier food and drinks are sold, provided and promoted across all of their sites and facilities.

01

The food and drink targets

Drinks	Food
Vending and in-house retail* food outlets:	Vending and in-house retail* food outlets:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No RED drinks to be available or promoted/advertised. At least 50% GREEN drinks, and no more than 20% drinks containing artificial or intense sweeteners (classified AMBER) are available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 50% GREEN foods and no more than 20% RED foods are available. No RED foods to be promoted or advertised
Catering	Catering
No RED drinks are provided (with majority of options to be GREEN).	No RED drinks are provided (with majority of options to be GREEN).

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Why has it been developed?

The Policy directive is about increasing opportunity and choice for staff and visitors in public health services to access healthy food and drink options.

In addition, this work will help to meet the Victorian Cancer Plan target of “at least 80 per cent of health services’ retail outlets and vending machines meeting Healthy Choices by 2024.



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Who does the Policy apply to?

The Policy directive applies to all sites and facilities across public health services including, but not limited to:

- hospitals
- public sector residential aged care services (PSRACS)
- integrated community health services

The Policy directive applies to the following food services within public health services:

- in-house managed retail food outlets, including items purchased by staff and visitors from patient/resident menus
- all vending machines (managed in-house and privately)
- all catering* provided to visitors and staff

Victorian public health services are encouraged to implement the Healthy choices: policy guidelines for hospitals and health services and the Policy directive across all of their retail food outlets – both in-house and commercially managed. This includes retail outlets that have food supplied from an inpatient/resident food service, managed by an external contractor.

* Catering applies to staff procuring food and drinks with health service (government funds) for meetings, functions, and events. This includes occasions such as workshops, conferences, community events, launches, celebrations and ceremonies, as well as client or community education, information, or training programs.

It also includes food/drinks provided (free) on the ward or in staff rooms/waiting rooms for staff/visitors (e.g. tea/coffee, water, fruit, biscuits, lollies). Whilst not included in the Policy directive, health services are encouraged to promote and communicate their healthy catering policy to any external groups using their facilities, for example community support groups.



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FoodChecker

Health services will use the dedicated Policy directive assessment function in FoodChecker to assess foods and drinks against the Policy directive targets.

The FoodChecker Policy directive assessment function allows you to assess your internally managed retail food outlets, vending machines and catering against the Policy directive targets.

The assessment will state if you meet each of the following targets individually:

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Drinks % targets	Food % targets
No RED drinks promotion	No RED food promotion

Note: except in the case of case of combined food and drink vending machines, food and drinks should be assessed separately for Policy directive reporting.



Key tips:

- Only the Food Checker assessment you choose to submit is visible to the Department of Health
- You can do as many assessments as you want, at any time. Complete at least one assessment for each in-house managed retail food service and one assessment per vending machine layout
- You only need one assessment per vending machine layout. (i.e., if you have three vending machines with identical layouts [when fully stocked] you only need one assessment for that layout, not three different assessments).
- Assess vending machines when they are fully stocked. Do not assess the planogram provided by your supplier as it can be different to what is actually in the machine.
- You can search and assess drinks to find out if they contain artificial sweetener.
- You should assess staff and event catering in order to plan and implement your healthy catering policy, BUT you will not need to submit catering assessments for Policy directive reporting. Questions will be asked about your organisation's healthy catering policy/processes.
- You have the choice to do a Policy directive assessment or standard Healthy Choices guidelines assessment in FoodChecker. This is relevant if you have commercially managed food retail outlets. If you do assess an commercially managed food retail outlet using the Policy directive assessment function, you have the option to report on this for Policy directive reporting to the Department of Health report.
- FoodChecker assessments need to be from within the last six months for your Department of Health reporting.
- Conduct your Food Checker assessment/s for the Department of Health reporting using the FoodChecker Policy directive assessment function.
- Assessments (using the standard Healthy Choices assessment function) do not assess foods and drinks against the Policy directive targets.

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Reporting to the Department of Health

Progress Tracker, the online reporting tool where each health service reports their progress towards meeting the Policy directive is accessible via the HEAS website.

Please note that only the FoodChecker assessments

you choose to submit in this online portal will be visible to the Department of Health.

Not only does the Progress Tracker tool serve as a reporting mechanism to the Department of Health, but it is a valuable tool for health services to plan, track, communicate and celebrate implementation of Healthy Choices within their individual organisation.

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Here to support you

We are here to support you in assessing your food and drinks against the Policy directive targets. You can contact one of our dedicated Nutrition Policy Advisors for information and advice specific to your health service's needs.

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