



# Policies for tackling obesity and creating healthier food environments

**2019 progress update  
Queensland Government**

March 2019

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

**QLD  
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 Queensland Government (July 2016 – June 2018) in relation to the recommended policies identified in the 2017 report.

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



Commitment to establish a state-wide health promotion agency, the development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework 2017-26, and two whole-of-government priorities focused on healthy weight. Leading efforts to develop the National Obesity Strategy



Continuing support for the 'Healthier. Happier' social marketing campaign



Coordinating governance mechanisms across all relevant agencies to ensure attainment of *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities*



### Recommended action areas for the Queensland Government

The 2017 Food Policy Index report prioritised 16 recommendations for action. Recommended focus areas for the next 12-18 months are:



**Leadership:** Continue efforts to establish a state-wide Queensland Health Promotion Commission (QHPC) to implement programs that promote health and wellbeing



**Food promotion:** Implement policies to restrict the promotion of unhealthy food and beverages in settings controlled / managed by the Queensland Government



**Food labelling:** Enhance existing menu labelling regulations by requiring food outlets to display interpretive nutrition labelling

# Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI)

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

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

## Assessment of progress made

The Food-EPI Australia 2017 report identified and prioritised 16 recommended policy actions for the Queensland 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 Queensland 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 **June 2018**.

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

### Substantive action

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

### Some action

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

### Limited action

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

Table 1: Criteria for assessment of progress made

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

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

## Actions taken (July 2016 - June 2018) by the Queensland 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
QLD1	Leadership	Continue efforts to establish a state-wide Queensland Health Promotion Commission (QHPC) to implement programs that promote health and wellbeing	The Queensland Government has committed to introduce legislation to establish a state-wide health promotion agency in 2019.	Substantive action
QLD2	Food provision	Improve compliance with the 'Smart Choices: Healthy Food and Drink Strategy for Queensland Schools' in all schools by extending reporting mechanisms, incentives and support systems	The Queensland Department of Education continues to develop and review student health and wellbeing initiatives and resources, provide advice and support to schools about implementing Smart Choices, and liaise with key stakeholders to deliver programs across Queensland. The Queensland Government continues to fund the Queensland Association of School Tuckshops to provide support and resources to implement / maintain the Smart Choices canteen strategy. In 2017/18, 52% of school tuckshops reviewed were compliant, compared to 12% in 2015/2016. In 2018, a state-wide snapshot survey of school tuckshops was conducted. However, there is no independent verification of compliance.	Some action
QLD3	Food provision	Establish a whole-of-government policy on healthy food procurement and provision across Queensland Government departments and settings	There is currently no government-wide policy around the provision of healthy food in public sector workplaces however the new Be Healthy, be safe, be well whole-of government framework integrates wellbeing into leadership, culture, work design and environment. The Healthier.Happier.Workplaces initiative supports all Queensland organisations to commit to health and wellbeing in the workplace.	Limited action
QLD4	Food labelling	Enhance existing menu labelling regulations by requiring food outlets to display interpretive nutrition labelling, potentially through adaptation of the Health Star Rating scheme	The Queensland Department of Health is leading the national review of fast food menu labelling schemes in Australia. In June 2018, further consultation was endorsed to strengthen menu labelling and a public health and industry co-design process is proceeding on issues including menu legibility, electronic menus, multi-serve items and third-party operators.	Some action
QLD5	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 Queensland Government has recently (2018) conducted monitoring of their 'Healthier drinks at healthcare facilities: Best Practice Guide', which indicated that 60% of health facilities are making progress to meet guidelines to restrict the sale and promotion of unhealthy drinks. Queensland is evaluating its fast food menu labelling scheme, with results available in 2019. No comprehensive monitoring of marketing of unhealthy foods to children is in place.	Some action
QLD6	Food promotion	Restrict the promotion of unhealthy food and beverages in settings controlled / managed by the Queensland Government	The Queensland Government continues to implement the 'Healthier drinks at healthcare facilities: Best Practice Guide' for use by all Hospital and Health Services (HHSs). This specifies that unhealthy drinks (e.g., sugary drinks) should not be promoted in Queensland HHSs. No other action was identified.	Some action
QLD7	Food promotion	Require all organisations that receive funding from the Queensland Government to restrict all promotion (including sponsorship) related to unhealthy food and beverages as a condition of funding	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action

QLD8	Governance	Implement formal health impact assessments on population nutrition and health as part of policy development and proposal process	The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) Guideline was updated in March 2018 and applies to all Queensland Government projects that are subject to an Environmental Impact Statement process. The Guideline states that the SIA must address 'health and community wellbeing', and considers a range of ways in which a project may impact health and wellbeing. Impact on population nutrition is not specified.	Some action
QLD9	Support for communities	Put in place overarching state-wide structures and associated resources for supporting healthy food environments at the community level across settings	Following the 2017 State election, the Government has maintained their commitment to rebuild preventive health and health promotion capacity through the establishment of a state-wide health promotion agency, and by supporting practical programs of proven effectiveness. The Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework 2017-26 outlines priority actions to support/foster healthy behaviours, with specific targets and annual progress reporting. In 2018, the government released two whole-of-government priorities focused on healthy weight. There is currently no state-wide structure in place to support communities to co-ordinate comprehensive local-level interventions.	Substantive action
QLD10	Support for communities	Extend commitment to existing social marketing campaigns by increasing their scope and reach, as part of broader efforts to improve population nutrition	The 'Healthier. Happier' social marketing campaign has continued to be supported by the Queensland Government, along with associated resources. Partnerships with Queensland Government departments and NGOs have aimed to extend the campaign's behaviour change messaging.	Substantive action
QLD11	Food retail	Develop and implement programs to incentivise sports and recreation venues and clubs to sell healthier foods and beverages whilst limiting unhealthy foods and beverages	The Queensland Government continues to fund the Alcohol and Drug Foundation to support amateur junior sporting clubs to improve the way alcohol is managed, and promote healthy food and drinks through the Good Sports Healthy Eating program. This aims to increase the availability of healthy options, develop healthy food and drink policy, promote water and encourage healthy fundraising activities.	Some action
QLD12	Food provision	Increase incentives for workplaces to adopt healthy workplace initiatives, and actively promote the initiative	The Queensland Government supports the newly implemented 'Be Healthy, Be Safe, Be Well' framework across the public sector. The government continues to support the 'Healthier. Happier. Workplaces' program, which supports and recognises best practice health promotion programs and policies across the private sector.	Some action
QLD13	Governance	Establish governance structures to improve policy coherence regarding agriculture, food, health, innovation / research and development policies	The Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet is coordinating governance mechanisms across all relevant agencies to ensure the attainment of <i>Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities</i> (2018). The strategy is focused on collaborative efforts across government and with partners. Two of the six whole-of-government priorities specifically relate to health and wellbeing	Substantive action
QLD14	Food retail	Expand existing initiatives with retailers / food service outlets in remote communities to improve in-store availability of healthy foods and limit unhealthy foods	The Queensland Government partnered with three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Shire Councils to conduct an 18-month pilot project aimed at reducing sugary drink consumption. For community stores this involved placing water only fridges at the front-of-store and selling water at cost-price.	Some action
QLD15	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	No specific progress has occurred since 2016.	Limited action
QLD16	Food retail	Implement programs, e.g., incentives or accreditation schemes, for restaurants, pubs and clubs to improve the healthiness of their menu options	At the Federal level, the Queensland Department of Health has contributed to the Healthy Food Partnership's 'Food Service Working Group', which has developed a pledge scheme to incentivise the food service sector to improve the healthiness of menu items and practices.	Some 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](http://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 Queensland 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, Queensland Government. Melbourne: Deakin University, 2019.

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



