



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT



The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre  
Systems and solutions for better health

# THOUGHT

A newsletter from the HE<sup>2</sup>: Healthy and Equitable Eating Study

**WELCOME** to the first edition of a quarterly newsletter about HE<sup>2</sup>: A systems approach to healthy and equitable eating study based at the Australian National University and supported by The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre.

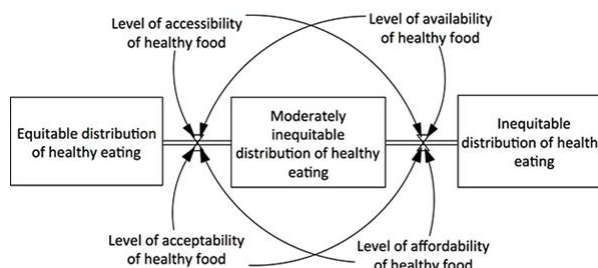
We hope this newsletter keeps you up to date with our news and activities. Please forward this newsletter to colleagues you think might be interested in our work.



## About the study

### Building evidence for equitable and healthy food policy

The prevention of diet-related chronic diseases requires policies and actions that improve the food environment and make healthy diets more readily available, affordable, accessibility and acceptable, and decrease the availability, affordability and acceptability of unhealthy diets.



Drawing on systems science, the HE<sup>2</sup> study aims to understand how the food system, people's daily living conditions, and individual level factors interact through different policy domains. Understanding the whole system's behaviour, we hope to reveal key leverage points or places to intervene most effectively to try to achieve equity in healthy eating. The study will provide an evidence base for what can be done to improve

nutrition equitably, and how to create and implement nutrition-sensitive and pro-equity public policy.

(The diagram shows a systems structure of healthy and equitable eating.)

You can read more about the HE<sup>2</sup> study on the [Prevention Centre website](#).

## Recent activities



## Collaborators meet to develop systems mapping

By [Ellie Malbon](#), Research Assistant

During our May meeting I facilitated a workshop for ‘thinking in systems’ about healthy and equitable eating. Many of you attended and it was great to see your enthusiasm for the process of mapping the many interconnected elements of the food system.

If you couldn’t attend, and as background for those who were there, I used a participatory diagramming method developed at the ANU by Barry Newell and Katrina Proust known as ‘collaborative conceptual modelling’.

A key part of this method is making time at the start of the workshop to allow each participant to write out their thoughts (their mental model) of the issue in question (in all its messy glory). This provided two things: a set of benchmark diagrams that we could refer back to throughout the process to allow all voices around the table to be heard, and the opportunity for a pairs of diagrams to be ‘blended’ together. This process of pair blending the mental models of healthy and equitable eating allows space for people around the table to compare their mental models of the issue, and even at times their view of public health or prevention science.

Since the workshop, I have collated the draft diagrams into an expanded causal loop diagram of healthy and equitable eating that articulates the collective perspective of the participants. We're now at the stage of reviewing the draft for clarity, as a major purpose of this diagram is as a communication tool and heuristic for the analysis of policy that improves levels of equity in health eating, and we will send this to the group for review shortly.

Thanks again to those who participated in the workshop. We look forward to seeing you at the next meeting on 26 November.

## Working with policy makers

### Case study planning

We've started planning with ACT and NSW colleagues to undertake the analysis of barriers and opportunities to taking a systems approach to government action to address healthy and equitable eating. A workshop will be held in a couple of months with ACT colleagues to scope the food environment in the ACT and refine the systems diagram. We will hold interviews to explore barriers and enablers for whole of government, intersectoral action for healthy and equitable eating later in the year. Dr Mel Pescud will also spend time in ACT Health setting up the research process, making sure the study is grounded in the reality of the government daily processes.

Also, we are scoping ideas with NSW Health relating to the Healthy Eating and Active Living strategy, with work to start in 2016. We are looking into the feasibility of :

- Investigating the barriers and enablers to successful implementation of whole of government efforts to create healthy food environments in NSW or
- Exploring the utility of organisational change theory and regulatory theory frameworks for informing the effective implementation of healthy food provision policies in the hospital setting.

## Meet a team member

### Dr Mel Pescud

We meet Dr Mel Pescud (right), the Food Policy Research Fellow working on the project.

#### **How did you come to be involved in the HE<sup>2</sup> study?**

After working at the University of Western Australia for eight years across several areas including child obesity, workplace health, nutrition literacy, alcohol use, mental health, and Aboriginal health, it was time to spread my wings and explore other research opportunities. My previous work was largely focused on individual behaviour change and I was keen to work in a new area where the focus was more on the broader level factors impacting health. I have a particular interest in nutrition due to the research I completed as part of my PhD where I investigated the food provision behaviours of disadvantaged parents with overweight children. I could see that more needed to be done in terms of creating more equitable healthy eating opportunities for people, and



when I saw the position with Professor Sharon Friel, I was very keen to be a part of the study.

#### **What have you learnt so far from your involvement in the study?**

In my previous roles back in Perth, I mainly worked in health promotion research and health promotion evaluation, so it has been a steep but very enjoyable learning curve moving into the policy and systems space. I have gained a lot of knowledge relating to the systems approach to viewing problems and solutions. I have also gained insights about the way in which policy is made and how that can impact inequities in healthy eating.

#### **What are you looking forward to?**

I'm really excited about working with our colleagues at ACT Health and NSW Health and interviewing government stakeholders. Much of my research in the past has been qualitative, involving interviews and focus groups, so I'm looking forward to getting out in the field and collecting data. I'm also keen to understand more about the policy process and to observe how embedding policy makers into the research process can help to make the research more real-world relevant.

## Outputs



### Social media

Recently Dr Mel Pescud was the face of the WePublicHealth Twitter account for a week in June and shared information in relation to the HE<sup>2</sup> study. To see Mel's tweets for the week, go to @WePublicHealth

## Upcoming events

Please send through any future event information to be included in the newsletter next quarter to: [melanie.pescud@anu.edu.au](mailto:melanie.pescud@anu.edu.au)

## Seminars/publications

Please send through any future seminars and/or publications information to be included in the newsletter next quarter to: [melanie.pescud@anu.edu.au](mailto:melanie.pescud@anu.edu.au)

For information about this newsletter or the project please contact  
Dr Melanie Pescud  
[melanie.pescud@anu.edu.au](mailto:melanie.pescud@anu.edu.au)

[Edit your subscription](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

