



Healthy food and beverage policy Cardinia Shire Council

Overview

Cardinia Shire Council has developed a *Healthy food and beverage policy* that aims 'to ensure food and beverages supplied to staff and visitors of the council promote health and support healthy eating'. This policy is underpinned by a 'Green Light System' to healthy eating, whereby food and drinks are classified as either 'green', 'amber' or 'red'. The aim is that all food and beverages available at the council (including those in vending machines, at meetings and from food vendors) follow these guidelines: a minimum of 50% 'green', a maximum of 30% 'amber', and a maximum of 20% 'red' food and drinks are available.

Putting plans into action

A number of steps were taken to develop and implement the policy. This first step involved talking to other councils that had already developed healthy catering policies to gain ideas.

The next step was to develop the draft policy and action plan based on information gathered about the current food environment at Cardinia Shire Council. A report, draft policy and action plan was presented to the senior management team (consisting of general managers and the chief executive officer) for approval. They were very supportive of the initiative, and the policy and accompanying action plan to guide the implementation were adopted.

As the final policy is to be applied to catering for staff functions and meetings, staff cafeterias, food and drink vans, vending machines and fundraising activities, a number of strategies are being implemented including:

- developing and implementing a staff survey to find out what types of food staff would like to see provided
- working with local caterers to assess their menus, and classify their food options as 'green', 'amber' and 'red'
- improving the intranet healthy catering page, to streamline the electronic ordering processes to highlight foods that are healthier choices, and limit the amount of 'red' foods available
- working with the food van vendor (who visits the council twice per week to provide food to staff) to increase the number of healthy food options available
- building relationships with the local fresh fruit and vegetable shop with regards to providing food for the council
- promoting the policy through the health and wellbeing section of the internal staff newsletter
- auditing foods in the vending machine, with healthier food options and suppliers being investigated.

The next step is to set up a health and wellbeing committee that will include representatives from a range of committees at the council. It is hoped that this committee will help drive the implementation of the policy across the council.

As the *Healthy food and beverage policy* aims to promote workplace health and wellbeing, there will also be strong links made to the Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program for workplaces, which is being rolled out in 2013.

Key factors for success

A key factor for success has been building relationships with a range of people, and seeking their advice and input into the policy. It has at times been challenging and, as with any organisational change, some staff were initially resistant. However, Sarah Green, Health Promotion Officer, sees gradually changing the mindset of the organisation about what foods should be provided as being part of the journey of implementing a healthy food policy.

The simple act of serving fruit platters at councillors' meetings has already delivered a positive response. The councillors are excited by the change and there are reports that no fruit is left on the platters at the end of meetings.

Cardinia Shire Council sees investing in their staff's health and wellbeing as the greatest investment of all. Staff spend a large portion of their waking hours at the office and the council is committed to making this environment the most supportive for good health as it can. The *Healthy food and beverage policy* is just one element in creating a healthy work environment.

Contact

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The information in this case study was obtained through discussion with Sarah Green (above). Information is correct as at mid-2012.

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