



Healthy choices, healthy communities City of Greater Geelong

Overview

Healthy choices, healthy communities is a City of Greater Geelong initiative that aims to provide appropriate food choices for the council's catered meetings and forums. It also applies to five council-operated stadiums and leisure centres.

This initiative was generated by the 'health and wellbeing arena', a committee at the City of Greater Geelong. This committee set healthy eating as a priority area, and approached Amanda Stirrat, Health and Wellbeing Officer, for suggested initiatives they could implement in this area. They decided to develop healthy eating guidelines. The healthy eating guidelines were titled *Healthy choices, healthy communities* and are part of the Greater Healthier Choices Strategy.

Healthy choices, healthy communities guidelines and resources are based on a 'traffic light' system, in which 'green foods' are classified as 'eat plenty', 'amber foods' are 'select carefully' and 'red foods' are 'eat occasionally'. When catering, the aim is to provide around 40% 'green', 40% 'amber' and 20% 'red' foods.

Putting plans into action

Initial consultation about the development of the *Healthy choices, healthy communities* guidelines was undertaken with leisure centre managers. This helped shape what the guidelines should look like.

A number of related resources were also reviewed and referred to during the development of the guidelines. These included the *Healthy Options WA: Food and Nutrition Policy for WA Health Services and Facilities* guidelines and Queensland's *A Better Choice Catering Guidelines for Meetings and Functions*.

A number of resources were developed to support this initiative, including:

- posters explaining the traffic light system
- fact sheets listing examples of 'green', 'amber' and 'red' foods
- preferred caterers' lists (whereby caterers' menus were assessed and approved foods listed).

The production of posters involved design work and development of the *Healthy choices, healthy communities* logo, which cost around \$600. The posters were printed and laminated in-house.

Many layers of consultation and approval took place to endorse these guidelines within the council, as follows:

- the guidelines, related resources and a report were presented to the executive management team, which consists of managers from various departments; the guidelines were then circulated to the general managers
- a healthy eating plan was developed that included applying the guidelines to internal catering, as well as leisure centres
- councillors passed these guidelines
- the guidelines were integrated into the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP).

To date, the process for developing and implementing the *Healthy choices, healthy communities* guidelines has taken a couple of years. The first year involved consultation, seeking approval, developing resources and posters, and integrating the guidelines into the MPHWP. The second year involved raising awareness about the guidelines and promoting the posters, including placing them in lunchrooms. Promoting the guidelines has also been incorporated into the induction of new staff, with all new staff receiving a healthy catering pack. Information and resources have also been published on the council website.

A council staff survey indicates that the initiative is progressing well.

Other

A broader food policy is also being developed at the City of Greater Geelong. This will include evidence about food and food mapping, and strategies to promote local food production, address food security and food waste, and provide healthy food choices.

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Further information

City of Greater Geelong website: <http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/> (search for 'healthy choices, healthy communities')

Direct link:

<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/ct/tag/article/item/8cdd8607eafabd0.aspx>

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

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