

Making the change to healthier eating: recreation centres

Introducing a healthy food and beverage retail policy at YMCA Victoria



In 2014, YMCA Victoria introduced a Healthy Food and Beverage Policy to be implemented over three years, in kiosks, cafes and catering services attached to 70 aquatic and recreation centres, across the organisation.

As part of this policy, YMCA initiated a 'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign, which aimed to phase out regular soft drinks by December 2015.

'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign results



No change in overall beverage dollar sales, despite clear decrease in the total beverage dollar sales for 'red' drinks.



Three centres met the policy target of only 10% fridge space allocated to 'red' drinks.

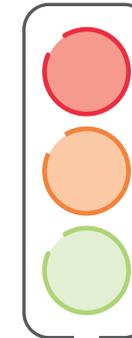


Large reduction in the unhealthiest drinks choice – 2000 fewer cans of 'red' drinks consumed per month.



The proportion of available 'red' items decreased from 71% to 45%, while the proportion of available 'green' items increased from 13% to 28%.

“Exit survey data showed that customers have not responded to the healthier food provision by bringing their own 'red' food and drinks from home.”



YMCA Victoria's policy was based on the Victorian Government's *Healthy choices: food and drink guidelines*, which uses a traffic light system to classify foods and beverages.

- Red:** Limit intake
- Amber:** Choose carefully
- Green:** Best choice

Top sellers after the 'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign

Top-selling 'green' and 'amber' drinks, after the 'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign, were:



Bottled water



Reduced-fat milk varieties



Bottled sparkling water



Diet soft drink



Flavoured sparkling water

Communication



YMCA have been pro-active in communicating the successes and challenges associated with implementing their policy through media, invited talks and conferences. This has encouraged numerous councils, health services, and recreation centres to follow suit.

In 2014, just under half of all ready-to-drink beverages sold were 'red'. By 2016, the proportion that were 'red' had decreased to around 30%.

Recommendations for organisations introducing healthy eating policies



Use promotional material to highlight the sugar content of drinks and rationale for the campaign.



Provide the support of health promotion staff to give implementation advice and information.



Ensure top down, central support, which was critical to the success of the policy.



Implement changes gradually and give autonomy to managers to make changes at their own pace.



Engage suppliers to ensure their support of the policy.



Provide resources, such as case by case advice, a toolkit, approved product list, and planograms for recommended fridge layouts.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 requires all councils in Victoria to facilitate an environment and culture where healthy choices are easy choices for all Victorians.

For more information about Alfred Health's trials and other organisations' work to implement Healthier Choices, visit: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/XXXXXX

