

# Promoting and supporting Healthy food & drink choices

## sport and recreation



## Healthy habits – keeping kids active and ahead of the game

### A Government commitment to support healthy eating and active living in children's sport and recreation

Helping Australian children develop healthy habits is a priority for the Australian, State and Territory governments. Sport and recreation environments are important in the lives of families and provide an excellent opportunity to promote the benefits of being active for life and eating well, especially for children.

Physical activity and healthy eating go hand in hand. Together they support children's growth and development, promote good health and wellbeing and prevent disease.

That's why the Ministers for Sport and Recreation and Ministers for Health are working together to help our kids establish healthy habits through increased physical activity and by improving the foods and drinks associated with children's sport and recreation.

### Setting the scene

Participating in sport and active recreation begins in childhood, with nearly 3.2 million young Australians involved in some form of organised sport or physical activity outside of school hours<sup>1</sup>. Sport and recreation environments are important family spaces for large numbers of children to improve their health and wellbeing through physical activity. In these environments, children can have fun, form life-long relationships, establish healthy lifestyle habits and be exposed to positive health messages that they carry with them throughout their lives.

We know that communities benefit in many ways when people become more active. Being physically active improves physical and mental health, and contributes to the economic growth and social fabric of communities.

When children are physically active and eat well, they can be at their healthiest and perform at their best. But the opposite is also true. Poor diet and insufficient levels of physical activity are linked to ill health and unhealthy weight gain, which now impacts one in four Australian children<sup>2</sup>.

In Australia around 40 per cent of the energy in children's diets now comes from 'discretionary choices' like junk food and sugary drinks<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, a third of children (35 per cent) regularly consume sugar-sweetened drinks, with one in six pre-schoolers having sugar-sweetened drinks almost every day<sup>4</sup>. We also know that only one third of children meet physical

<sup>1</sup> Australian Sports Commission. AusPlay participation data for the sport sector: Summary of key national findings, October 2015 to September 2016 data. Canberra: 2016. Available from <https://www.ausport.gov.au/information/ausplay> [cited 2018 Jun 26].

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Health Survey: First Results, 2014-15. Cat No. 4364.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS; 2015. Available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4364.0.55.001> [cited 2018 Jun 26].

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australian Health Survey: Nutrition First Results - Foods and Nutrients, 2011-12. Cat No. 4364.0.55.007. Canberra: ABS; 2014. Available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.007~2011-12--Main%20Features--Discretionary%20foods-700> [cited 2018 Jun 26].

<sup>4</sup> The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne. RCH National Child Health Poll – Kids and food: Challenges families face. Melbourne: 2017. Available from: <https://www.rchpoll.org.au/polls/kids-and-food-challenges-families-face/> [cited 2018 Jun 26].

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activity guidelines and that more than two thirds of children spend too much time being sedentary<sup>5</sup>. There is an opportunity for sport and recreation settings to be more supportive, family-friendly environments where participation is encouraged, and the benefits of healthy, active lifestyles are reinforced by offering and promoting healthier food and drinks to children.

## Leading the change together

Change is necessary, and the governments will lead this change by promoting healthier food and drinks in government sport and recreation facilities, and increasing the availability and promotion of healthy food and drinks at those venues. We believe this work will encourage more families to attend these community spaces, and experience more of the benefits of being physically active in these settings.

We know that change works best when we work together, and to achieve this goal, we will collaborate with local governments and organisations that provide sport and recreation facilities and programs for children.

In partnership, we can help Australian families enjoy healthy lifestyles by creating active environments that also encourage healthy eating, to help our kids get the best start in life.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Health Survey: Physical Activity, 2011-12. Cat No. 4364.0.55.004. Canberra: ABS; 2013. Available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/462FBA87B642FCA4CA257BAC0015F3CE?opendocument> [cited 2018 Jul 18].