



Food Policy

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1. Introduction

Mitchell Shire Council has made a commitment to the Mitchell community through its Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) 2013-2017, to improve access and consumption of healthy food across the municipality.

Council provides facilities and delivers events which contribute to the wellbeing of the Mitchell community. There are however, signs that our Mitchell residents wellbeing is facing serious challenges, and the way we respond will help shape the quality of life within the municipality for many years to come

2. Background

Health behaviours, such as giving up smoking, increasing physical activity and consuming healthy food and drinks have been shown to reduce the incidence of lifestyle diseases later in life.

In 2011 the VicHealth Indicators survey indicated that more than half of the Shire's populations are classified as being overweight or obese (56.3%) which is significantly higher than the Victorian average (48.6%). Mitchell also ranked higher than the Victorian average for soft drink consumption daily with 19.3% of adults compared to Victoria's 12.4% of adult's consumption according to VicHealth Indicators 2012. Further evidence from the Victorian Population Health survey shows that Mitchell does not reach the recommended two litres of water per day with Mitchell only reaching 1.2 litres compared to Victoria's 1.3 litres.

Local councils such as Mitchell are well placed to positively influence the health behaviours of staff, volunteers and visitors, and to role model good health behaviours to the wider community by ensuring that all members of the community are able to access healthy food and drink choices when attending council operated facilities, workplaces and council sponsored events. This policy supports and enhances programs and services already delivered by Mitchell Shire Council and links with Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2013-2017; Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017; Mitchell Health Profile 2013.

It is also consistent with other state endorsed food policies such as *Healthy Choices: policy guidelines for sport and recreation centres*¹ and nationally recognised guidelines such as *The Heart Foundation's Guide to Healthier Catering – A Healthier Serve*².

¹ VIC Dept of Health, 2014, *Healthy Choices: policy guidelines for sport and recreation centres*, Department of Health <http://heas.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/sport-and-recreation-centres-and-parks>

² Heart Foundation of Australia, 2011, *Workplace Wellness Programs*, <<http://www.heartfoundation.org.au>>

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that members of the Mitchell community, staff, volunteers and visitors have the opportunity to access healthy food and drink choices when attending council operated facilities and workplaces and at council sponsored events.

4. Aim

The aim of this policy is to increase the availability of healthy food and drink choices and to encourage and support the community to make food and drink choices that will impact positively on health.

5. Principles

When applying this policy, Mitchell Shire Council staff should be guided by the following principles:

- that food **choice** is important for all members of the community
- that all members of the community have the right to access healthy food and drink
- that food and drink has social and cultural meaning and that eating is enjoyable
- Mitchell Shire Council is a role model for the community and supports initiatives that have the potential to impact positively on the health and wellbeing of the community
- that it is important to create an environment which makes healthy food and drink choices the easier choice for staff, volunteers, the community and visitors
- healthy food and drink choices should be promoted using consistent, positive messages
- that the provision of food is safe and food handling and food hygiene practices are followed
- where feasible, the provision of food and drink should be provided in an environmentally sustainable way (e.g. developing a plan to minimise the amount of waste produced, how it is disposed of, taking advantage of recycling options and using environmentally friendly containers)
- that food and drink provided will reflect the *Dietary Guidelines for Australians*³, *The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*⁴ and other government recommendations for people living in Australia to achieve and maintain good health

³ NHMRC, 2003, *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia incorporating the Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers*, Commonwealth of Australia, < <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au> >

⁴ Children's Health Development Foundation and Deakin University, 1998, *The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*. Commonwealth of Australia, < <http://www.health.gov.au/> >

6. Scope

This policy is applicable to all Mitchell Shire Council staff and volunteers.

7. Policy

The Food policy is relevant to the Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2013-2017 priority 'Healthy and Vibrant communities'.

Mitchell Shire Council's commitment as evident in the MPHWP 2013-2017 includes strategies:

1.2.1 Working in partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, agencies and networks to explore and implement localised, best practice food security initiatives.

1.2.2 Increase community awareness of healthy eating and related skills on how to access, store and prepare food for the best health outcomes.

It is also consistent with other state endorsed food policies such as *Healthy Choices: policy guidelines for sport and recreation centres*⁵ and nationally recognised guidelines such as *The Heart Foundation's Guide to Healthier Catering – A Healthier Serve*⁶.

8. Definitions

Fair food-	Food that is adequately priced for farmers and consumers provided through a supply chain that has fair working conditions and high standards of animal welfare
Food access-	Refers to the ability of individuals, households and communities to reach and use the food supply available to them. Adequate access to the food system is defined as the ability to obtain quality food in local communities which is safe, affordable, culturally and environmentally acceptable and nutritious. People experience good access when healthy food choices are within walking distance (400–500 metres in urban areas) or by readily available, frequent and affordable public transport.
Food security -	Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. When people do not have access to the food they need, this is defined as <i>food insecurity</i> .
Food supply-	A sustainable food supply is one that provides

⁵ VIC Dept of Health, 2014, *Healthy Choices: policy guidelines for sport and recreation centres*, Department of Health <http://heas.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/sport-and-recreation-centres-and-parks>

⁶ Heart Foundation of Australia, 2011, *Workplace Wellness Programs*, <<http://www.heartfoundation.org.au>>

	healthy food to meet current food needs. It is also important that healthy ecosystems are maintained to provide food for generations to come with minimal negative impact on the environment
Food system-	The chain of activities beginning with the production of food and moving on to include the processing, distributing, wholesaling, retailing and consumption of food and eventually the disposal of waste.
Healthy food-	Healthy diets are those that are high in fresh, plant based foods such as fruits and vegetables, nuts and legumes and low in meat and animal products. This can include a focus on organically-produced foods which are not genetically modified and are chemical free
Resilience-	The resilience of a system refers to how effectively it can respond to shock and adapt to change while still continuing to provide food.
Safe food-	Safe food has been prepared, manufactured, stored and transported so it arrives at the consumer unadulterated, fit for human consumption and does not cause food poisoning. Food is said to be unsafe when it causes harm after consumption.
Sustainable food-	Sustainable food is produced in a way that regenerates or improves the natural environment. It comes to our plates through short, efficient and fair supply chains which make healthy food affordable for all people and provides fair returns to farmers

9. Responsibilities

Officers in the Sustainable Communities Directorate, specifically the Leisure Services, Community Development and Youth Services units will be responsible for maintaining/upholding this policy.

10. Procedure

This policy applies to all food and drink provided and/or sold at Mitchell Shire Council operated facilities and workplaces and council sponsored events. Mitchell Shire Council will use a phased approach to implement this policy. This policy applies to Phase 1 and 2 which a review will be completed. Phase 3 will be progressively implemented over the next financial year.

Within policy scope:

Phase 1 – Review and identify actions to internal catering and food provision

- Provision of food and drinks to Mitchell Shire Council's staff, visitors and volunteers including:
 - Work related meetings for staff and visitors
 - Workshops and training events
 - Conferences and visiting speaker events
 - Council meetings for elected members and staff

Phase 2 – Review and identify actions for External catering and food provision

- Provision of food and drinks at Mitchell Shire Council's operated facilities and council sponsored events including:
 - Community events provided by Mitchell Shire Council and/or sponsored in partnership with other organisations
 - Food and drinks provided at Mitchell Shire Council's operated facilities such as leisure centres and youth drop in centres.

Phase 3 – Review and identify actions for other food provision and supportive environments

- Vending machines
- Fund raising
- Prizes and vouchers
- Food retail outlets across the municipality

Outside of policy scope:

This policy directive does not apply to food and drinks that staff, visitors or volunteers bring from home for their personal use or to share for personal celebrations such as birthdays or farewells. It applies to food and drinks funded by Mitchell Shire Council.

11. Related Documents

Council documents that have informed the development of this policy include:

- Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2013-2017
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017
- Mitchell Health Profile 2013
- Youth Services Strategy 2014-2018

12. Policy Review

This policy will also undergo a process of regular review to ensure its effectiveness in meeting the policy aim and vision. This will include a process of evaluation which measures what has been completed and the effect of the work on the community.

Progress and outcomes of the policy will be reported back to the Mitchell Shire Council and community at regular intervals.

13. References

1. VIC Dept of Health, 2014, *Healthy Choices: policy guidelines for sport and recreation centres*, Department of Health <http://heas.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/sport-and-recreation-centres-and-parks>
2. Heart Foundation of Australia, 2011, *Workplace Wellness Programs*, <<http://www.heartfoundation.org.au>>
3. NHMRC, 2003, *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia incorporating the Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers*, Commonwealth of Australia, <<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au>>
4. Children's Health Development Foundation and Deakin University, 1998, *The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*. Commonwealth of Australia, < <http://www.health.gov.au/>
5. VIC Dept of Health, 2014, *Healthy Choices: policy guidelines for sport and recreation centres*, Department of Health <http://heas.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/sport-and-recreation-centres-and-parks>
6. Heart Foundation of Australia, 2011, *Workplace Wellness Programs*, <<http://www.heartfoundation.org.au>>

14. Appendix