



**Re: Submission to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee on the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019.**

The Queensland Association of School Tuckshops (QAST) is a not-for-profit community organisation dedicated to the promotion and support of Queensland tuckshops in their endeavours to offer nutritious, hygienic and economically viable food services.

We are the lead support agency for tuckshops in Queensland offering QAST members benefit from the wealth of experience of our management committee and quality services delivered by industry professionals.

QAST applauds the bill to establish the Health & Wellbeing Commission to improve the health of all Queenslanders and create a systems approach to health across numerous sectors. The current high rates of overweight and obesity amongst Queensland adults and children are unacceptable. Similarly diet remains poor across the entire population, for example with low intake of fruits and vegetables (Queensland Health, 2018).

School tuckshops are important for the provision of healthy foods and beverages that support the Health and Physical Education curriculum, as well as providing vital funds to support school services. Tuckshops provide an important learning experience for students – that healthy foods can be affordable and tasty. For schools in many disadvantaged areas, tuckshop are also a key strategy for food security, with breakfast and lunches provided free to children in need.

QAST has been funded by Queensland Health to provide support services for school tuckshops around the Smart Choices Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy in Schools since its introduction in 2007. Since that time QAST has worked exclusively with tuckshops to improve menus whilst ensuring tuckshops remain financially viable. The 2018 Queensland Tuckshop Survey (QAST, 2018) has shown that 73% of tuckshops have more than 50% GREEN items on their menu. This is a significant improvement on previous results.

However ongoing work is still required to further improve all tuckshops and sustain changes. The 2018 Queensland Tuckshop Survey also found that 90% of tuckshop menus were still offering RED choices, and many tuckshops were struggling to financially manage the tuckshop. Tuckshops now operate as a business, which needs to break even, or ideally make a small profit.



Most Queensland tuckshops are managed by volunteer parent body organisations, which experience high turnover. Combined with a high turnover of tuckshop staff, it is important to ensure ongoing delivery of support through existing services to sustain positive changes. QAST encourages the Commission to consider funding structures that allow for maintenance of existing health promotion services, rather than focusing only on projects that provide new services.

QAST also encourages the Commission to ensure that projects and grants are offered based on community consultation. There is a wealth of experience and knowledge within community organisations regarding the needs of community and success of previous projects. The best outcomes will be achieved if consultations occur soon after establishment of the Commission, and on an ongoing basis to assess changing community needs.

QAST has been fortunate to receive funding from a wide range of organisations and departments over the past 20 years, such as Queensland Health, Department of Education, Community Gambling Benefit Fund and the BUPA Foundation. The reporting requirements for such projects vary. Whilst we recognise that evaluation of outcomes is critical to ensure transparency and efficient use of funds, the best outcomes have been achieved for projects with simpler reporting mechanisms and less frequent reports. Similarly QAST has experienced short contracts at times, which does not allow stable employment of staff. This should particularly be considered during the transition period between funding available from Queensland Health and from the new commission.

QAST's recommendations for the funding model would be to ensure that reporting was simple and completed annually and that the lengths of the contract were sufficient to plan for a stable workforce at three years or more.

QAST would be happy to work in coalition with other organisations, to provide broader support to schools to create a health promoting environment beyond the tuckshop. Queensland Health funding has been instrumental in our ongoing work to support healthy food and beverage choices in Tuckshops and it is hoped that the Health and Wellbeing Commission will continue to fund our activities. We look forward to the establishment of this crucial organisation and its capacity to improve health for all Queenslanders.

#### References:

- QAST (2018) 2018 Queensland Tuckshop Survey. Available at: <http://qast.org.au/queensland-tuckshop-survey-2018/>
- Queensland Health (2018) *The health of Queenslanders 2018: Report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland*. Queensland Government, Brisbane.