

Question on Notice

No. 917

Asked on 7 June 2007

Mr Fenlon asked the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford) —

QUESTION: With reference to the Smart Choices: Healthy Food and Drink Strategy that became mandatory in all Queensland state schools this year —

Will he advise how the implementation of the strategy is contributing to improved student health?

ANSWER:

With around one in four children now considered overweight or obese, our Government has acknowledged the important role schools can play in motivating students to develop healthy lifestyle habits at a young age.

The *Smart Choices Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools* was developed in partnership with Queensland Health to highlight the nutritional value of foods and drinks that are supplied to students in schools. Being overweight or obese is usually caused by eating too much food or the wrong type of food, combined with doing too little physical activity or being inactive for too much of the day.

The *Smart Choices* strategy aims to embed positive eating habits through children's choice of healthy food and drinks from a young age. Poor diet and obesity can affect students' confidence and academic performance and those who make healthy choices now are more likely to carry these habits into adulthood.

Since 1 January 2007, the implementation of the strategy has been mandatory in all state schools. The strategy applies to all situations where food and drinks are supplied to students across the school environment, including tuckshops, vending machines, excursions, classroom rewards and curriculum activities.

Under the strategy, certain foods and drinks can be supplied to students no more than twice a term. These are categorised as 'red' and include all types of confectionery, deep fried foods, large serves of snack foods, ice creams, cakes, muffins, pastries and slices, and sugar sweetened and artificially sweetened drinks.

The strategy is supported by teaching programs that help children to think about eating healthy food more regularly and eating less healthy foods less often. These changes in student thinking and behaviour contribute to improved student health. It is hoped that by addressing this issue in schools, students' diet and behaviour at home will be influenced.

Since introducing *Smart Choices* in state schools, many schools have reported noticing higher levels of classroom attention and alertness in students throughout the day.