

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO INCREASE CONSUMPTION OF VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Overview of the development process

The National Action Plan was developed through a process that piloted the Planning Framework for public health practice (the Framework process). The process is detailed in the National Public Health Partnership report ¹. The process utilised available evidence about the benefits of increased consumption of vegetables and fruit², as well as effective strategies that increase consumption³. Consultation with the vegetable and fruit industry and non-government organisations occurred resulting in an iterative process that was able to consider and incorporate opportunities for future collaborative work.

An evidence base

Extensive research and analysis of the literature that identified ‘best bet’ interventions, grouped by a ‘settings’ approach, supports the National Action Plan. Elements necessary for success of such interventions were also determined. The interventions were assessed against criteria of feasibility, acceptability, effectiveness, selectivity and timing. The same criteria were applied throughout the Framework process. Readers are referred to the Framework report for more information.

Alignment with *Eat Well Australia*

Concurrently with the Framework process, *Eat Well Australia* (and the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy and Action Plan*) was developed via extensive consultation with many experts, government, non-government, community and industry sector groups.

Increasing consumption of vegetables, fruit and legumes is one of four nutrition priority initiatives of *Eat Well Australia (EWA)*. The other priority initiatives: vulnerable groups, addressing overweight and obesity, and maternal and child health, contain elements that relate and link to increasing consumption of vegetables, fruit and legumes.

Eat Well Australia gives prominence to infrastructure and capacity building over the next decade to ensure successful implementation and returns in terms of health gain, and social and economic gains for Australia. SIGNAL has prioritised increased consumption of vegetables, fruit and legumes as a focal point for the first three years of the decade.

Although developed through different processes, *Eat Well Australia* and the National Action Plan for increasing consumption of vegetables and fruit are closely aligned. *Eat Well Australia* provides a framework of strategic direction and vision, whereas the Action Plan identifies specific initiatives. The Action Plan outlines the proposed priority action areas over the next three years, and is set against the backdrop of the Intervention Portfolio, which identifies interventions over a five-year period.

Status

This National Action Plan has been endorsed by SIGNAL members and is supported by the National Public Health Partnership Group. However, the proposals and recommendations do not have a formal mechanism for funding support. As a result,

some of the proposals are not currently supported by resources while others are already under way.

The key action due to commence in early 2001 is the employment of a project manager resourced by joint Commonwealth/State/Territory funding. The project manager will be responsible for a number of other actions identified in the Action Plan such as:

- identifying and disseminating information about effective community based programs;
- facilitating a coordinated approach to the promotion of vegetables and fruit in schools; and
- assisting jurisdictions develop more collaborative relationships with industry and NGOs.

SIGNAL is also progressing the development of consumption guidelines within existing resources.

VISION

**Increase the proportion of the population who consume vegetables and fruit every day.
Increase the proportion of the population who consume vegetables and fruit at or above the recommended level.**

GOAL

Increase vegetable and fruit consumption of the Australian population by at least one serve every day over five years.

OBJECTIVES

Food supply

Increase and sustain access to high quality, safe, affordable vegetables and fruit.

Awareness

Increase the proportion of the population aware of the need to increase their consumption of vegetables and fruit.

Attitude / perceptions

Increase the proportion of the population who perceive the benefits of vegetables and fruits in terms of taste, convenience, low relative cost, safety and health.

Knowledge

Increase the proportion of the population with the knowledge of the recommended minimum intakes of vegetables and fruits.

Skills to purchase and prepare

Increase the proportion of the population with knowledge, skills and confidence to select and prepare convenient, low cost, tasty vegetable and fruit dishes.

TARGET GROUPS

A population approach is taken. Greater priority is to be given to adolescents, low-income groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

PORTFOLIO OF INTERVENTIONS

Through the Framework process, a national level portfolio of recommended interventions to promote fruit and vegetables was developed (Table 1). This is an evidence-based statement of an effective, realistic and comprehensive approach to promoting increased consumption of vegetables and fruit, given current knowledge. The Portfolio comprises policy interventions, program interventions and infrastructure support mechanisms.

TABLE 1:

**NATIONAL LEVEL INTERVENTION PORTFOLIO
TO PROMOTE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES**

POLICY INTERVENTIONS		INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT	
Legislation	Public Policy	Systems Development	Education, Training and Skill Development
<p>Cross government review of legislation affecting v&f supply and development of mechanisms to monitor proposed new legislation.</p> <p>Enhancement of regulatory frameworks that provide a secure environment for development, assessment and introduction of 'novel' v&f products.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with ANZFA 	<p><u>Position statements:</u> Consumption Guidelines for the population.</p> <p>Policy position papers on v&f and prevention of disease from NHMRC. Supporting position statements from NHF and other NGO's.</p> <p>Influence broad social policy to make v&f affordable and accessible for vulnerable & disadvantaged people.</p> <p><u>Resource allocation & incentives:</u> Feasibility studies of potential impact of non-health government policy on cons. of v&f, e.g. taxes, pensions.</p> <p>Feasibility study of tax rebate/ incentive system for suppliers & transport operators in rural and remote areas.</p> <p>Consideration of v&f supply issues in rural & regional development plans.</p> <p>Mobilisation of intersectoral partners to review and re-allocate resources e.g. AHA/ HRDC to contribute % levy revenue for promotion programs.</p> <p>Cross government endorsement & involvement in implementation of components of the EWA relevant to the sector.</p>	<p><u>Management:</u> Organisational structure (eg Foundation) to manage intersectoral consultation, promotion strategy and coordinate efforts in areas of overlap including between National, state and local levels.</p> <p>Templates and resources developed by 'Foundation' to translate material in a consistent way into supporting state and locally relevant intervention strategies.</p> <p>Needs assessment for dissemination of best practice guidelines to state, regional and local levels.</p> <p>Establish funding systems & funding selection criteria</p> <p><u>Information systems:</u> Enhance research, evaluation & monitoring base.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with NHMRC funding. <p>Identification & surveillance of determinants, incl. ongoing monitoring of food supplies in remote areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to EWA Monitoring and Evaluation initiative: <i>No. 1: The National food and nutrition monitoring system.</i> <i>No. 2: Evaluation plan.</i> 	<p>Workforce training and development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to EWA initiative: <i>No.1: Human resource requirements.</i> <i>No.3: Primary Health care professionals.</i> <i>No.4: Non-health workforce (to include v&f and food service industries).</i> <p>Accreditation/ incentive scheme for suppliers and retailers and transport operators (particularly in rural and remote areas).</p> <p>Service providers using best practice guidelines and innovative practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to EWA Research and Development initiative: <i>No. 2: Private sector investment in research.</i> <i>No. 3: Promoting innovation.</i>

PROGRAM INTERVENTIONS

National Promotion	Food Supply	Community Initiatives	Schools and Childcare	Health Sector incl. NGO's
<p>Social marketing awareness and advocacy campaign including point of sale and concurrent community initiatives, (defined by intersectoral involvement and market research).</p> <p>State and community leaders form their own coalitions to deliver campaigns and other initiatives to promote v&f consumption at the local level.</p> <p>Co-promotion of v&f with various commodity groups e.g. AMLC, Rice Growers Assoc.</p> <p>Audit of previous efforts and best practice to promote/ increase v&f consumption and dissemination of results: <i>An issues paper on barriers to consumption of v&f and previous efforts to promote an increased consumption of v&f.</i> CSIRO 1999: Portfolio development project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link with EWA Communication initiative: <i>No. 3: Nutrition literacy.</i> 	<p>Mapping and feasibility studies of v&f supply chain to identify and test assumptions about critical factors impacting on price, quality, access (key determinants of consumption) and opportunities for product development</p> <p>Product development to better position v&f in the convenience food market.</p> <p>Systems to improve communication of market signals and information through v&f supply chain.</p> <p>Best practice guidelines for the various types of food service settings including worksites and special events catering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link with NHF & partners re: <i>Takeaway food project and projects in canteens, special and sponsored events.</i> <p>Link with programs promoting sustainable production systems that improve quality and productivity of v&f supply (e.g. <i>Forum Sustainable Food Industry Development 1996</i>).</p>	<p>Demonstration projects in community settings e.g. Foodcent\$ program, Penrith Food Project</p> <p>States implement channel specific health promotion programs promoting v&f that support national social marketing initiatives. eg Fruit n Veg week</p> <p>Support, maintenance and enhancement of local supply chains and increase availability and accessibility of v&f in disadvantaged areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link with EWA Vulnerable People initiative: <i>No.3: Access to food that meets the dietary guidelines.</i> 	<p><u>2 levels:</u> 1) Incorporated as part of national social marketing initiatives, 2) Comprehensive and long-term approach, curriculum based and supported by policy & food service changes, industry and parental involvement e.g. canteen/ tuckshop / foodservice guidelines, v&f industry price incentive schemes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link with Health Promoting in Schools program, NHF. Link with EWA Maternal and Child Health initiative: <i>No.3: Nutrition for children under 5 years old</i> <i>No.4: Nutrition for school-aged children.</i> 	<p>Development of patient education and support resources for use by GPs. Secondary prevention focus in collaboration with NHF, Diabetes Australia and Cancer NGOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link with NGO position papers.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCOPE OF PROGRAM INTERVENTIONS INCLUDED IN THE FRAMEWORK PORTFOLIO

Social marketing

Media advertising, public relations activities and point of sale promotion.

Food supply initiatives

Actions and policies by growers, manufacturers, distributors / transporters and retailers to increase access to quality fruit and vegetables.

Community interventions

Vegetable & Fruit 'week' and other community based promotions

Small group education

Community supply

Social action

Schools

A comprehensive, integrated approach involving curriculum, the school environment and the community.

Health sector

Non-government organisations

Primary health care

Professional organisations

Food service

Institutions

Hospitality

Commercial food service

- events
- take aways

The proposals identified in the Portfolio of Interventions could be rolled out over the coming five years. The Action Plan identifies possible priorities over the next three years.

PRIORITIES FOR NATIONAL LEVEL INTERVENTION PORTFOLIO TO PROMOTE VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

Jurisdictions drew priorities from the Portfolio of Interventions that met the following criteria. That the interventions:

- are national in focus
- are appropriate for action over the next two years
- are in the context of Eat Well Australia
- have the capacity to build sustainability.

The resultant priorities are mainly capacity building components (in descending order).

Infrastructure Support - Systems Development

Management:

- Organisational structure to manage intersectoral consultation, promotion strategy and coordinate efforts in areas of overlap including between national, state and local levels.

Policy Interventions - Public Policy

Position statements:

- Consumption guidelines for the population
- Policy position papers on V&F and prevention of disease from NHMRC. Supporting position papers from NHF and other NGOs

Infrastructure Support: Systems Development

Management:

- Establish funding systems and funding selection criteria

Program Intervention: National Promotion

Social marketing:

- Social Marketing: awareness campaign including point-of-sale and concurrent community initiatives (defined by intersectoral involvement and market research)

Infrastructure Support: Systems Development

Information systems:

- Identification and surveillance of determinants, including ongoing monitoring of food supplies in remote areas.
- Enhance research, evaluation and monitoring base.

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN 2000 – 2005

NATIONAL PRIORITY ACTIONS

NATIONAL PROMOTION

- Establish a collaborative partnership for national promotion and related activities.
- Develop a campaign plan – resources, funding, guidelines for use of logo, roles, market research.

SIGNAL Actions			
	Action Proposed	People	Time frame
Establish a collaborative partnership. Develop a campaign plan.	Finalise the Partnership Protocol and sign off	Veg & Fruit Working Group	August SIGNAL meeting
	Write Consumption Guidelines	Program Manager	November 2000
	Develop and trademark a logo and guidelines for use	Veg & Fruit Working Group	November 2000 – February 2001
	Review models for CW / state funding, identify contributions by states and CW to a partnership, write up statement of roles and responsibilities of SIGNAL members	Program Manager	
	Employ a Program Manager to undertake above tasks and to convene a management group. The group could comprise intersectoral partners and reflect interest in national promotion	NPHP & SIGNAL	Proposal to next NPHP meeting.
	Write up elements for success in Portfolio of Interventions	Consultants NPHP	November 2000

NATIONAL PRIORITY ACTIONS

FOOD SUPPLY

- Map the fruit and vegetable supply system – access, distribution & transport, wholesaling, price, taxes, availability, range, quality.
- Work up an action agenda to address the factors that influence supply and that target vulnerable groups.

	SIGNAL Actions		
	Action Proposed	People	Time frame Resources
Map the vegetable & fruit supply system	Identify sources of funding for a food supply project, and for vegetables & fruit to be the first commodity	SIGNAL	Now
	Develop questions regarding v&f supply system that the food supply project may be adapted to answer	SIGNAL	Results in 1 – 2 years
Work up an action agenda			From 2002

NATIONAL PRIORITY ACTIONS

COMMUNITY

- Disseminate examples of effective community based programs and develop evaluation guidelines.
- Provide seeding funding for demonstration community programs.

SIGNAL Actions			
	Action Proposed	People	Time frame
Disseminate examples of effective community based programs and develop evaluation guidelines	Gather examples of effective programs; assess the quality of programs; write them up	Program Manager SIGNAL Secretariat	
	Disseminate the examples	Program Manager SIGNAL Secretariat	12 months from the start
	Keep the program register up to date.	Program Manager SIGNAL Secretariat	On-going
Provide seed funding for the uptake of evidence-based community programs identified above	Identify options and sources of funding for community programs	SIGNAL	2002 on
Establish a demonstration grant scheme to build evidence and innovation	Identify options and sources of funding	SIGNAL	2001 on

NATIONAL PRIORITY ACTIONS

SCHOOLS

- A coordinated approach to the promotion vegetables and fruit in schools, through the Health Promoting Schools Framework and relevant policies, including resource development.

	SIGNAL Actions		
	Action Proposed	People	Time frame
A coordinated approach to the promotion of vegetables and fruit in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify available resources for schools that promote vegetables and fruit.• Assess quality; collate resources.• Disseminate resources	Program Manager	12 months from start

RESOURCES REQUIRED

- SIGNAL support: direction setting, liaison and dissemination, advocacy.
- Recruitment of a Program Manager (full time), to undertake tasks as described. The position would be funded initially for twelve months, with likelihood of extension to match the Action Plan. Funding for the first twelve months is available from SIGNAL. It is proposed that the Program Manager be based with a jurisdiction, in a location that offers easy access to industry and other key groups.
- Industry sponsorship of some strategies would be sought through a collaborative intersectoral partnership.

REFERENCES

¹ National Public Health Partnership. A Planning framework for public health practice – A systems perspective. Pilot for public health nutrition – Using fruit and vegetables as a case study. Draft April 2000.

² The relationship between the consumption of fruits and vegetables and health status – CSIRO Health Sciences and Nutrition. 1999. SIGNAL.

³ Evidence tables: effective interventions for fruits and vegetables. Marg Miller and Hargita Stafford; compiled on behalf of the National Public Health Partnership. (unpublished)