

Submission
No 40

INQUIRY INTO CHILDHOOD OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

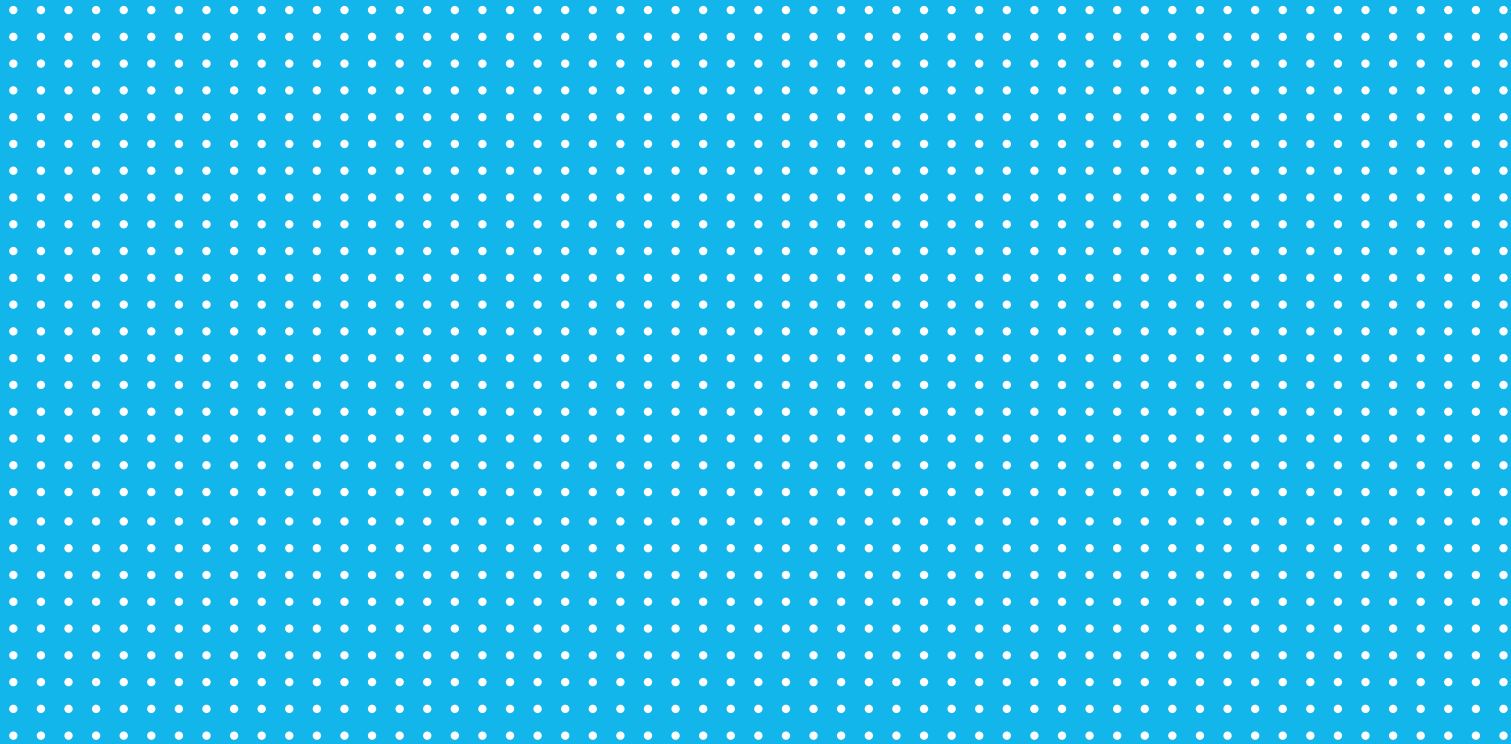
Organisation: The Good Foundation

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The Good Foundation Submission

NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S
PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO
CHILDHOOD OVERWEIGHT
AND OBESITY



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Introduction

In providing a submission to the NSW Legislative Council's Parliamentary Inquiry into childhood overweight and obesity, this submission highlights The Good Foundation's success in achieving positive outcomes for the community through the provision of skills based healthy eating programs.

Our current work, across multiple jurisdictions, provides a strong framework for us to address issues of concern to this Inquiry, with particular reference to the following points from the Inquiry's Terms of Reference:

- b. strategies to assist parents and carers in enabling their children to make healthier food and beverage choices and be active, including by participating in sport;
- c. measures to support 13 to 18 year olds to make healthier food and beverage choices and be active, including by participating in sport; and
- f. the potential for collaboration on strategies to reduce childhood overweight and obesity with the non-government and private sectors.

In support of the Inquiry's investigations, we will outline our key capabilities and successes, providing options and opportunities for the NSW Government to consider when looking at policy and program priorities to address overweight and obesity in children.

The Good Foundation welcomes the opportunity to outline our priorities and approaches to addressing one of the most pressing health priorities of our time. We are pleased the NSW Legislative Council, through the Standing Committee on Social Issues, is seeking to map this significant area of health risk for Australian children and applaud the NSW Government's commitment to reduce childhood overweight and obesity by 5% by 2025.

Who We Are

The Good Foundation (TGF) is an independent not for profit organisation that was established in 2010 to deliver health and nutrition programs at a national level. The organisation is managed by an executive team that operates out of a head office in Melbourne and the organisation is overseen by a Board of Directors.

TGF delivers **Jamie's Ministry of Food** under a licence agreement with Jamie Oliver Enterprises Limited in the UK. TGF is also licenced to deliver **Jamie Oliver's Learn Your Fruit and Veg** program, which has recently completed pilot testing.

TGF advocates for a healthier Australia and works with governments nationally to assist in the development of health and nutrition policy and program delivery. TGF sits on a range of state and local forums, coalitions and advisory groups, providing advice on issues including nutrition, community engagement and best practice program delivery, including the Western Sydney Diabetes Prevention Alliance, where we are currently contributing to the development of policy recommendations that will address the issue of childhood obesity and the prevalence of diabetes in the west of Sydney.

TGF also coordinates the annual **Food Revolution Day** on the ground in Australia, in partnership with the Jamie Oliver Foundation in the UK. This national day of action has been designed to provoke debate and inspire real, meaningful, positive change in the way our children access, consume and understand food. Each year hundreds of thousands of events are run across the globe on a single day, with thousands of events run in schools and workplaces across Australia. These events are designed to raise awareness and create discussion about the importance of healthy eating, which particularly focuses on children re-engaging and having fun with healthy food.

Background

Our vision is to lead the transformation of Australia's food habits through advocacy, program delivery and collaboration to maximise the health, wellbeing and productivity of communities.

Over the past 20 years, Australian food consumption choices have changed dramatically. We're now eating the wrong things and too much of them. We're not getting a balanced diet and our lifestyle has created an unhealthy reliance on takeaways, snacks and readymade meals which don't provide the right kind of nutrition for good health. As a result, we're now more likely to develop diet related illnesses like heart disease, cancer and diabetes. This is the first generation in which children are predicted to die younger than their parents.



1 in 4 Australian children are recognised as being overweight or obese and sadly these figures are continuing to rise. TGF is focused on delivering programs, providing resources and engaging in projects that promote good health and nutrition, providing practical and applicable capabilities for individuals to apply to their everyday life.

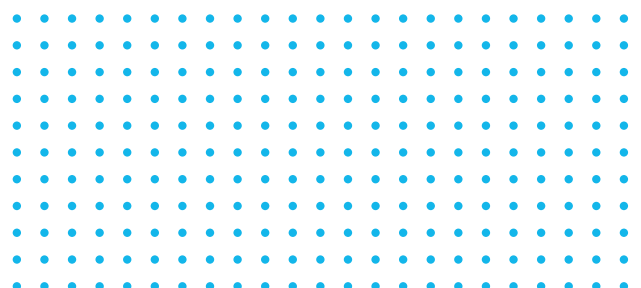
This effort includes delivering programs that work to reinstate the desire and ability to cook, essential skills that are no longer being passed on like they once were. Cooking is an important life skill which everyone should learn as it empowers people to take control of their lives and their health. If we don't appreciate the basics of fresh food and cooking, we're not likely to see it as an essential part of our daily life and our children risk losing the ability to cook completely.

TGF opened the first Jamie's Ministry of Food Centre in Ipswich in 2011, partnering with the Queensland Government. Our first Mobile Kitchen launched soon after, travelling across the State delivering the program to outlying regional areas.

Since then, we have partnered with the Victorian Government in their Healthy Together Victoria program, opening a permanent kitchen in Geelong along with a second Mobile Kitchen to cater for the needs of regional communities.

A further two kitchens have since opened with the support of corporate and local government partners in Wetherill Park, NSW, and Noarlunga, SA. This year the Victorian Mobile Kitchen was relocated to Western Australia, where it now operates across the state in partnership with Edith Cowan University.

We are pleased to report that since the commencement of operations in April 2011, over 32,000 participants have enrolled in a course nationally.



TGF works with local community organisations to target participants who are most at risk of chronic disease, which is largely disadvantaged and vulnerable groups including single parents, the unemployed, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people with a disability and young people. Nationally, the program has been effective in reaching our target audience with 43% of participants enrolling on a concession card rate and 7% of participants advising they have a disability.



Places on the Mobile Kitchens have consistently sold out, with over 95% of available places being filled across the past four years, demonstrating a strong desire and need within the community to participate in the program.

Recently, TGF completed pilot testing on our new children focussed program, Learn Your Fruit and Veg. We are excited to have recorded positive results for a practical, hands-on cooking program for young people that can be delivered efficiently and effectively at scale. Accessibility sits at the heart of the program's design, with each class designed to be deliverable with minimal equipment and without the need for access to a teaching kitchen – all lessons can be taught in a basic classroom, with recipes prepared by students at their desks. In addition, delivery through a “train the trainer” model makes this program accessible to even the most regional and remote communities.

Reaching our Goals

TGF believes success in achieving the ambitious goals set by the NSW Government will require:

- A comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach delivered at a population level.
- Investment in effective health education campaigns.
- Investment in proven programs that can be delivered across the state, with a focus on;
 - enabling parents to support their children to make healthy food choices on their behalf;
 - equipping children and teenagers with the practical skills to embed positive behaviours from a young age;
 - effectively engaging with communities most at risk of chronic disease; and
 - supporting whole-of-community responsibility for positive health outcomes rather than specifically targeting the overweight or obese so as to avoid stigmatisation.
- Partnerships and collaboration across all sectors, including the private sector, on a range of strategies.

Program Delivery in Australia



To date, TGF has reached over 32,000 Australians through our hugely successful and effective Jamie's Ministry of Food program. Having completed a successful pilot of Learn Your Fruit and Veg, we are excited to commence the roll out of this second program.

Over the past five years, TGF has developed an enormous capability to parlay the knowledge and experience gained through delivering Jamie's Ministry of Food into co-designing customised programs that can respond specifically to the strategic health imperatives identified by the NSW Government.

TGF can deliver tangible outcomes in tackling the issues of overweight and obesity through effective:

- Community Engagement
- Program Management
- Program Delivery
- Program Evaluation

Obesity is a problem that cannot be solved by government alone. Goodwill and the evidence based programs of the non-profit sector are also insufficient in addressing the full extent of this enormous society-wide issue. Real change can only be achieved when all sectors collaborate to change our society's landscape and work together to normalise and facilitate healthy eating across the community.

TGF is skilled at working with a range of diverse stakeholders in a multitude of settings. Since our establishment, we have recognised the need to broaden our funding base and rather than rely solely on government funding, we have engaged a range of commercial partners to support our programs.

This approach to program delivery has provided TGF strong and effective relationships with a range of leading corporate organisations including Woolworths, The Good Guys and Stockland. These relationships have given TGF influence in the development and implementation of our partner's social corporate responsibility programs and we play a strong role in developing policies that impact on the health and wellbeing of their staff, clients and customers.

TGF has delivered joint events and programs with corporate partners including:

- Food Revolution Day;
- Delivery of nutrition seminars for staff, customers and the general public;
- Cooking demonstrations for customers and clients;
- Online and newsletter content on healthy eating and good nutrition.

Our work with our corporate partners offers the opportunity to go beyond program delivery and impact their corporate, built environment and consumer landscapes, having a far reaching impact on community health and habits at a population level.

Jamie's Ministry of Food

Jamie's Ministry of Food is a community based cooking program that teaches basic cooking skills to people over the age of 12 from all backgrounds and provides them with the skills they need to prepare simple, fresh, healthy food quickly and cheaply.



It works to address the gap between the information individuals are provided, on nutrition and healthy eating and their practical experience and abilities. With dietary behaviour changes as the primary objective, the program has been designed to build self-efficacy, confidence and self-motivation amongst participants and has been evaluated as effective in doing so in a study conducted by Deakin University and the University of Melbourne.

The classes are available to the general public, who can access them directly, and to groups who have been identified by other organisations as in need of support, such as Diabetes NSW. Groups most at risk of chronic disease are targeted for participation and classes.

The program is available at a heavily subsidised fee thanks to the generosity of our corporate and government partners, ensuring that everybody can learn the essential skills of basic cooking. Classes are available six days per week with morning, afternoon and evening classes on offer and run for 90 minutes.

Students take home Jamie's cooking hints and tips, nutrition advice and information on seasonal produce and budgeting, with hands on lessons from a dedicated Food Trainer. They also take home the meal they prepare to share with family and friends to inspire them as well.

The program is designed to assist participants and the broader community teaching people to cook healthy meals for themselves and their families. Participants are encouraged to cook meals at home between classes and report back on their experiences, offering support and positive reinforcement as they introduce new foods and experiences to their families. Many participants say that before the course they had never eaten a meal at the dinner table or considered cooking with their children.

Participant feedback on the program as included at Attachment A.

Case Study: Partnership with Diabetes NSW in Wetherill Park, Sydney

Different groups within our community have differing nutrition support needs. TGF collaborates with other community organisations to adapt our program to suit the needs of particular groups and ensure classes are targeted and meaningful.

Our **Jamie's Ministry of Food Centre** in Wetherill Park collaborates with Diabetes NSW to provide targeted classes for both type 1 and type 2 diabetics and their families, helping them learn to make good, nutritious food. The program works to support young adults to build independent living skills, including cooking and healthy eating knowledge, and addresses the lack of services for vulnerable teens and young adults transitioning into independent living.

Through interaction with the Jamie's Ministry of Food, young adults build friendships and bonds, joining together at the end of each class to enjoy the meals they have cooked.

The courses are offered to young people under the age of 25 with a Diabetes NSW dietitian attending each class to provide additional advice, answer any questions and suggest recipe alternatives where appropriate. The program has helped these young people learn how to put advice into practice, grow in their cooking confidence, develop new kitchen skills and help them with meal planning.



"The friendly and welcoming atmosphere made coming to the classes something I looked forward to! I feel more confident in making healthy choices when cooking. I have learnt so many things about cooking, especially with diabetes, and therefore I am able to plan meals to align with my dietary needs."
- Chloe, participant

"It was an extremely friendly environment where I could learn basic cooking skills and understand nutritional information more clearly. All the meals cooked were simple enough to prepare on my own later. Also cooking healthy meals from scratch has been enjoyable."

I cook every second night for myself and my housemates and we all love it! I've been able to share with them what I've learnt and now they also enjoy cooking for themselves."

It has helped me understand the savings of the food I'm preparing and how much per week I should be eating of certain foods. Definitely glad I did this course! Would do it again in a heartbeat."
- Joshua, participant

The success of the collaboration has led to an extension of the partnership in other states, with Diabetes SA, Diabetes WA and Diabetes Victoria.

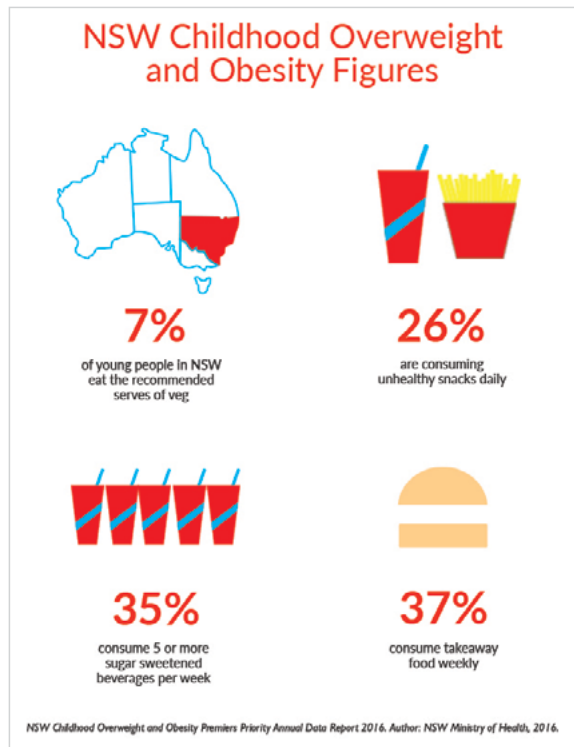
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Case Study: School Holiday Program

Youth is a critical time for the development of healthy behaviours, as the patterns developed when people are young continue into their adulthood.

The prevention of weight gain is a key challenge for this demographic and the need to instil positive eating habits to prevent the development of overweight, obesity and chronic diet-related diseases is a key investment that needs to be made in the health of our young people.

Jamie's Ministry of Food has a strong connection with this demographic, who respond positively to the brand. To date, almost one third of our participants were aged under 25, with 17% aged under 18.



In a number of our centres, we have forged strong links with local high schools, particularly in Geelong and Ipswich, where the program has been incorporated as a permanent feature on the school curriculum of local schools for the past two years.

Recognising the importance of engagement with this demographic, TGF has developed a tailored youth program delivered during school holidays which includes increased nutrition content and a recipe selection tailored to young palates, including healthy snack and dessert options.

In addition to working with local schools, TGF works with community organisations to ensure disadvantaged youth and young people facing food insecurity in particular, are targeted for participation.

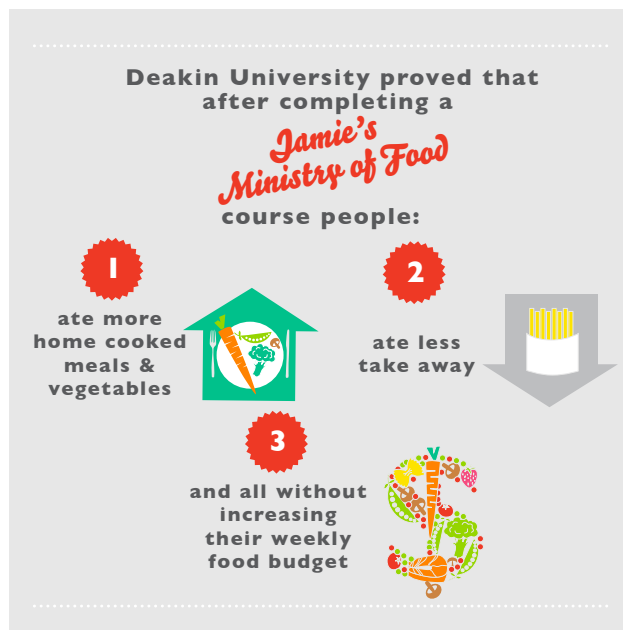
The Jamie's Ministry of Food School Holiday Program has been hugely successful. Commencing this year, we have delivered 20 courses across NSW, QLD, VIC and SA at 95% capacity. The demand for these programs reflects the huge attraction young people have to the Jamie Oliver brand. Each course runs for 16 hours across four days and has had an outstanding completion rate of 91%*.

*Completion is defined as participation in a minimum of 3 out of 4 sessions.

THE GOOD FOUNDATION'S KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INCREASED INVESTMENT IN PRACTICAL, SKILLS BASED PROGRAMS

Both government and private investment in program delivery is required to assist individuals to translate available information into practical skills they can embed into their everyday lives. This should include a particular focus on key target demographics including parents, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, people with disabilities, children and teenagers.



TGF believes program focus should be on:

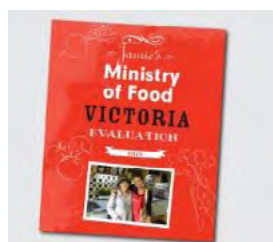
- Delivering programs that support parents to make healthy food choices for their children; and
- Delivering programs that embed the basic skills and knowledge in children to make healthy food choices throughout their lives.

Jamie's Ministry of Food is a grassroots response to the lack of basic food skills among adults. By teaching people to cook for themselves and equipping them with some fundamental skills and food knowledge, communities are empowered to live healthier, happier lives. Jamie's Ministry of Food teaches

people everything they need to know to make healthy, delicious meals.

Through this work, TGF has seen a significant improvement in overall healthy eating outcomes for participants across the engaged demographics. This includes increasing participant's intake of fruit and vegetables, positively influencing their food choices in the supermarket and a decreased intake of take-away meals. These individuals have also been empowered to improve the overall food choices of their families.

Jamie's Ministry of Food has been proven effective at generating lasting behaviour change amongst our participants. Recognised for its success in behaviour change, the program was the winner in the Promoting Healthy Eating category of the VicHealth Awards 2015. The program was also recognised in the 2016 SA Public Health Awards. Two extensive evaluations of the program have been completed by Deakin and Melbourne University across Queensland and Victoria. Full copies of the evaluation can be found here:



TGF is also experienced in delivering programs as part of a broader systems approach to health promotion. An independent evaluation was conducted by the Centre of Excellence in Intervention and Prevention Science (CEIPS) of our program as part of the Healthy Together program in Victoria and found that the Jamie's Ministry of Food program was a catalyst for broader systems change resulting in far reaching impacts across the community.

For further information please refer to Attachment B.

2. PRACTICAL FOOD EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

TGF is a strong advocate for practical food education in schools as an important part of the fight against childhood obesity. Research shows the importance of introducing children to healthy foods and instilling healthy habits as young as possible in order to prevent overweight and obesity from occurring in children. Our experience in delivering practical cooking classes shows hands on programs are effective in achieving sustained behaviour change.

A number of factors combine to limit the ability of children to learn to cook - school based cooking classes are no longer compulsory; working families are time poor and many no longer sit at the table to share meals (let alone cook from scratch); and recipes and cooking traditions aren't being passed down as they once were. These factors mean many people reach adulthood without ever learning how to cook for themselves.

Providing nutrition and healthy food information is not enough to embed positive behaviours in our children. TGF recognises the importance of combining these practical skills with physical activity to achieve a truly healthy lifestyle. In order for them to make healthy choices, we need to instil in them the practical skills they are lacking to make healthy meals for life.

TGF has been working with relevant schools to embed practical cooking classes in curriculums at a local level through our Jamie's Ministry of Food centres nationally. The response from schools has been overwhelming, with teachers advising that the elective has become a high demand subject. This led to the development of a school holiday program (discussed above) to increase accessibility for young people. TGF has successfully engaged with Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and Vocational Education Training (VET) nationally to inspire young people to build important life skills.

In order to achieve far-reaching change at a population level, these opportunities should be incorporated into the curriculum with widespread access available to all students, and as young as possible.

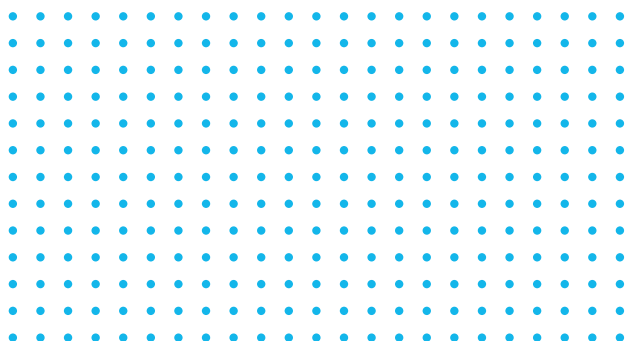
TGF recently completed the pilot of our children's program, **Learn Your Fruit and Veg**. The program is a fun, educational and practical learning experience designed to teach children about food, what it is, where it comes from and how it affects our bodies. The program brings fruit and vegetables to life with seasonal lesson cards. Many of the recipes can be made in ordinary classrooms and don't require a kitchen, making cooking and food education accessible to all children regardless of the amenities of their school or their geographic location. Resources have extended curriculum links providing teachers, nutritionists or childcare workers with the ability to incorporate food and health education seamlessly into their curriculum or classes.

The pilot was recently completed in Victoria and delivered to students from grade 1-6. Lessons ran for 90 minutes with each class focusing on a different fruit and vegetable. Students were able to touch, taste and smell each vegetable and fruit before completing a Jamie Oliver recipe. All recipes were able to be made without using heat and could be completed in a standard classroom with students working at their desks.

An evaluation of the pilot found 98% of students tried the food they had made and they also went on to ask their parents to shop for the vegetable or fruit they had learnt about in the class. They were also keen to use the program recipe at home and to show their parents what they had cooked.

As noted above, accessibility sits at the heart of the program's design, and it is TGF's objective to see this program implemented in as many schools as possible across the country. NSW could indeed lead the nation by instilling the principles of Learn your Fruit and Veg into classrooms across the state.

Our program design has focussed on a model that is affordable and simple to implement to ensure it is within the reach of all schools. Equipment needs have been kept to a minimum and a train the trainer model would be employed for maximum participation.



3. INTRODUCTION OF A LEVY ON SUGAR SWEETENED BEVERAGES

The consumption of sugar sweetened beverages, including soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks and cordials, is a strong contributor to weight gain, obesity and chronic disease in Australia.

TGF promotes consuming water over sugar sweetened beverages in all **Jamie's Ministry of Food Centres and Mobile Kitchens**. TGF believes people should enjoy calories as part of a tasty, balanced meal, not through the consumption of nutrition empty beverages.

TGF supports:

- Controls on children's access to sugar sweetened beverages, including limits in schools and other community settings, child focussed sporting venues and government controlled spaces.
- The implementation of measures to reduce children's exposure to marketing for sugar sweetened beverages, as discussed in the submissions of The Heart Foundation and the Obesity Policy Coalition
- NSW Government to advocate for the introduction of a levy on sugar sweetened beverages, as an effective means of discouraging their consumption and raising revenue that can be reinvested in preventative health initiatives. There is evidence that levies can deliver strong returns in a short span of time. Mexico, which introduced a 10% levy on sugary drinks over a year ago, has recorded a 6% decrease in consumption, with the greatest reduction in consumption in lower socioeconomic households.^[1]

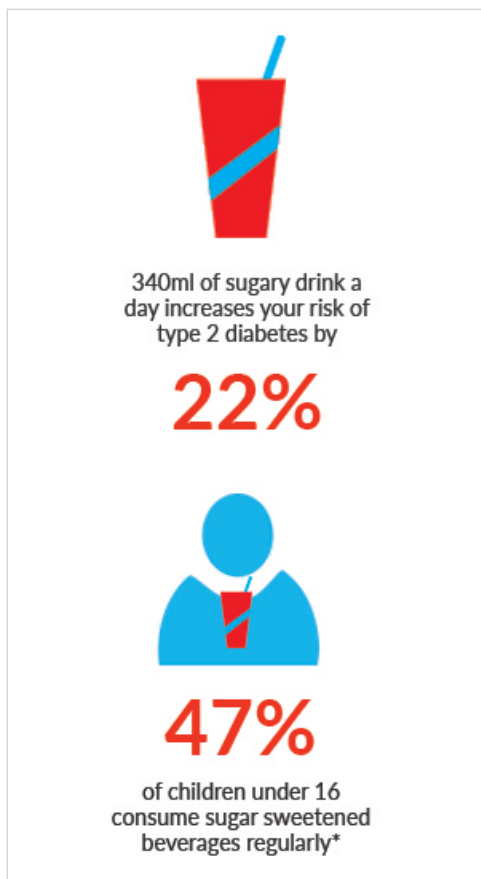
4. SUPPORT FOR POLICIES AND STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE ACCESS TO AND CONSUMPTION OF FRESH FOOD

TGF recommends the NSW Government support and implement policies and strategies that promote access to and the consumption of fresh food to ensure fruit and vegetables are accessible across communities. This should be a key pillar of a population approach to influencing the health and wellbeing of residents of NSW and mitigating the growth of obesity and diet-related disease.

Any increase in the cost of fresh food will decrease fruit and vegetable consumption and have a dire effect on the health of Australians and, ultimately, the overall health budget. Research has shown an additional two serves of vegetables for each Australian would reduce our health care costs by \$71 million a year. This would also lead to a reduction in the risk of high-cost health treatments for chronic diseases such stroke, coronary heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.

The protective benefits of a diet rich in fresh fruit and vegetables is undeniable. With obesity and diet-related disease at an all-time high in Australia, the population must be encouraged to eat more fresh food, not be discouraged by further barriers to consumption, particularly for low-income families.

At a time when investment in preventative health has been scaled back nationally, the need to support healthy behaviours, such as fresh food consumption, is more crucial than ever.

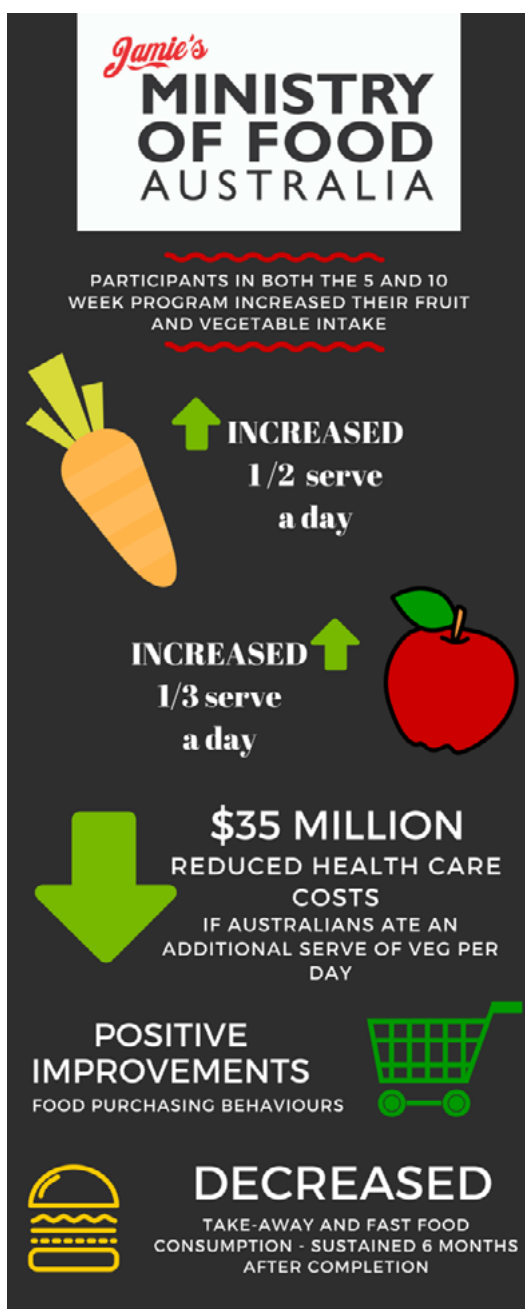


The NSW Government can leverage its position as a key procurer of services to influence food supply across the state, for example by implementing policies that require the sale of healthy options and limit access to unhealthy options in government run or government funded settings.

¹ M Colchero et al "Beverage purchases from stores in Mexico under the excise tax on sugar sweetened beverages: observational study" *BMJ*, 2016, 352 at 2

TGF recommends that the NSW Government enable and promote broad access to fresh food by:

- Mandating the sale of healthy options and limiting the sale of unhealthy options in government funded settings;
- Continuing to deliver education campaigns that promote the consumption of fresh food;
- Investing in programs that increase the consumption of fresh food; and
- Continuing to advocate at a national level for policies that support access to fresh food, for example, for the continued exemption of the GST on fresh food.



SUMMARY

Australia's overweight and obesity problem is unquestionable. The need to affect change is enormous and is already upon us. In order to affect that change, and meet the NSW Government target of reducing childhood overweight and obesity by 5% by 2025, we need comprehensive action at both the population and grassroots levels, empowering individuals to make choices for their own benefit and that of their families.

Population level strategies, such as delivering education campaigns, and influencing the food supply and a levy on sugar sweetened beverages, all incentivise positive behaviours and nudge people in the right direction to reverse the most worrying societal trend in our history. Program delivery is required, however, at the community level to facilitate people to make their own change and to ensure these lifestyle changes are maintained for a lifetime.

TGF believes health education is best delivered in a practical way that can be applied to everyday life. Knowledge is only part of the equation. Helping people to build the skills to successfully enact change in their diet is what truly enables them to sustain a healthy lifestyle.

TGF, through its delivery of the Jamie's Ministry of Food program in Australia, has built a successful model which can be up scaled efficiently and effectively, is interesting and engaging for participants, delivers effective outcomes and attracts the very target audience that is most at risk in this diet crisis.

TGF has the capacity to deliver programs state-wide, working with community partners and reaching the target clients who are most susceptible to the risk of obesity. We have the experience to engage communities to embrace these core principles and share them in a true Jamie "pass it on" philosophy. Importantly we are able to work effectively across all sectors with the strength of our brand, attracting strong corporate buy-in to enact real and sustained change.

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