

INQUIRY INTO FRESH FOOD PRICING EDUCATION PANEL

- 1. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I will come back to breakfast programs in a moment. I am happy for you to take this question on notice. How many schools currently have a Crunch&Sip program?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to take that on notice.

ANSWER:

The Department of Education does not collect this data centrally. Implementation of Crunch&Sip is a local decision made by school principals in consultation with teachers and the school community more broadly. Crunch and Sip program is an externally developed program implemented by NSW Health in NSW.

- 2. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You are providing a resource in your Healthy School Canteen. Do you conduct any data collection around canteens, such as which schools have canteens?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: We do. We do that in conjunction with the Department of Health. At this point in time there are 103 school canteens in government schools in New South Wales that have reached the accreditation—that is probably a strong word, but how we view what a healthy canteen looks like.

ANSWER:

Schools are able to self-nominate for a “menu check”, which is a voluntary process that school canteens can use to have their menu assessed against the Healthy School Canteen Strategy. As at 3 August 2018, 114 government school canteens have completed this voluntary process with the menu being verified as meeting the Strategy requirements.

It is important to note there will be many more schools throughout NSW that serve healthy food and drinks in line with the Healthy School Canteen Strategy.

- 3. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many canteens are there?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: There are 103 that are classed as healthy canteens. There are approximately 1,600 canteens, but I would like to clarify that on notice.

ANSWER:

Schools make decisions about the provision of school canteens. While schools may have facilities for the operation of a canteen, it is up to the individual school if, and how they operate a canteen service.

The department estimates that around 1,800 NSW public schools have a canteen

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4. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you able to provide us with a list of those schools on notice?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes. I will look into whether we have that level of data.

ANSWER:

Schools make decisions about the provision of school canteens. The department does not hold accurate information on the total number of schools that do not operate a canteen, or do not operate a canteen for five days per week.

5. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Will you provide a geographic breakdown of the 103 schools? Are they mainly in Sydney or around the State? I am happy if you want to take it on notice.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I will take any detail on notice but I am aware that they are across the State, so there are examples in metropolitan areas as well as in some rural areas such as Orange where schools have achieved that quite successfully.

ANSWER:

As at 3 August 2018, 114 NSW public school canteens were verified as a Healthy School Canteen, based on the completion of a voluntary menu check process. The geographical breakdown of these schools is as follows:

Metropolitan North	16
Metropolitan South	27
Regional North	26
Regional South	8
Rural North	22
Rural South and West	15
Grand Total	114

However, it is important to note that there will be many more schools throughout NSW that serve healthy food and drinks in line with the Healthy School Canteen Strategy.

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6. **The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I mentioned specifically the Crunch&Sip program, which we have been told is a useful program. The Cancer Council was running one mainly in the Hunter, I think, and across the State as well, but that has now stopped. Are you aware of any other healthy food eating programs? Again I am happy for you to take that on notice.
- Ms ALONSO LOVE:** I will take that on notice to get back to you of any that we are aware of, yes.

ANSWER:

Principals, in consultation with their community, make decisions about programs being delivered in the school that complement curriculum requirements.

Live Life Well @ School is a collaborative initiative between NSW Ministry of Health and the school sectors in NSW. *Live Life Well @ School* is supported in NSW primary schools to promote healthy eating and physical activity to students. The program aims to get more students, more active, more often and focus on healthy eating habits.

In addition, anecdotal information about other healthy food eating programs delivered in NSW public schools include the 'Fruit and Veg Month', 'Vegetable Week' and 'The Big Veggie Crunch', 'Get Up and Grow' and 'Munch and Move'. These programs have been developed by NSW Health.

7. **The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I am interested in the gardens in schools concept. Some inner-city schools do not have enough vacant land, and schools that are being proposed will be located in multistorey buildings. How will kids be able to get a garden in action? We have community gardens we can go to.
- Ms ALONSO LOVE:** I think it is probably less about curriculum and more about how we use schools and assets and how we manage design. I am happy to take that as a question on notice but I am aware that the design of new schools takes into account things like the ability to move around physically and all those sorts of things. I am happy to look at whether that takes into account the possibility of gardens, food production and those sorts of things.

ANSWER:

The Department uses a modern design approach to maximise play space and green space in new and upgraded schools. This can include open space on ground level or internal or rooftop multipurpose spaces. While the specific use of school space is determined by school principals, even schools on small sites, such as some of those in the inner city school can make innovative use of space for productive gardens which can include vertical gardens and planter boxes.

Schools are also able to enter into joint use agreements with local councils and other community groups that can help to gain access to play space or green space at nearby locations.

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8. Mr JUSTIN FIELD: My question is related to the breakfast program, which we have gone through to some degree. From the evidence the Committee has heard, I got the sense that there were some real challenges in certain parts of possibly Western Sydney and also regional communities with a lot of children having come to school without having had breakfast, or an adequate breakfast, which was having significant impacts on their learning and on the ability of the teacher to teach them in class. I am surprised that there are no guidelines. I want to delve a more into what discussions may have been had about the impact of that and why many schools see the need to run a breakfast program. What discussions have happened within the department about what response would be appropriate from government?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I am happy to take that as a question on notice in terms of perhaps over the past three to four years what guidance we have given to principals or any information that we have distributed around that. I am aware that schools get particular funding which is available to a principal to use in different ways to support the needs of their students. They could choose to use that on a breakfast program if that was one of the things that they thought their community most needed to increase—

ANSWER:

NSW public schools are committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all students, including good nutrition. Breakfast clubs in schools are usually established to assist families in providing students with good nutrition at the start of the day to support their learning in class.

Many NSW government schools offer breakfast programs and do so in a variety of ways. The decision to offer a breakfast program is made by individual schools in response to local community needs.

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9. Mr JUSTIN FIELD: This is specific funding.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Not for breakfast programs but for student wellbeing.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Is that a per school amount or a per student amount, or is it on application?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: A formula exists around what schools get particular money, and they can choose to use that in a way that supports their local community. I think the Local Schools, Local Decisions reform has meant that we have asked principals to make those kinds of decisions and run programs that are most appropriate to their school rather than saying, "This is how you must do it. This is how it goes across the State." As you noted, in some communities it is a more significant issue than in others. I am happy to provide you with any information about what guidance we have given principals in the past.

ANSWER:

Principals in NSW public schools have the flexibility to manage their school's funding and resources to meet the needs of their students. Principals consult with staff, parents and carers to determine the best way to support the learning needs of their students.

10. Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Have you had any feedback from principals or teachers about the amount of time they have to spend on these sorts of programs?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I am not aware of any but I am happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER:

The NSW Department of Education does not collect information about the implementation or operation of breakfast programs centrally.

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11. Mr JUSTIN FIELD: If schools identify children in their classes who clearly have not had adequate food, is there a process of engaging with the parents or even reporting them?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Schools in most instances, if they need to provide food to the student that day, can do that and many schools have the capacity, either through the canteen or through food that they might keep in the office, to provide that. If that is an ongoing issue they can either get advice from their school counsellor or from particular support staff that exist within the department. They are encouraged to speak with parents around how to manage it and assist families to do that. But if that is an ongoing issue and they believe that there is neglect in place, and they think that is having a significant impact on the child, they would be in contact with our Child Wellbeing Unit who can provide advice about what other services might assist or whether, in fact, a report to the Child Protection Helpline would be necessary to ensure the safety of that child.

ANSWER:

Principals consult with staff, parents and carers to determine the best way to support the learning needs of their students. This includes issues that relate to the health and wellbeing of students, including the provision of adequate food.

A school would only report if there was a concern that was causing harm to a child's safety, welfare or wellbeing, or if there was concern that a child's basic physical need was not being met, or at risk of not being met.

12. Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Do you know how many reports have been made to that helpline with regard to access to food?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: No, I am not aware but I could take it on notice.

ANSWER:

The Child Wellbeing Unit received a small number of enquiries from school staff relating to access to food. Exact numbers are not able to be provided as often calls related to multiple issues.

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13. Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Can a canteen that is classified as a healthy canteen sell soft drinks?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to take that on notice because I suspect that it depends on the classification of soft drinks.

ANSWER:

Sugary drinks have been banned in school canteens and vending machines since 2007.

The Strategy encourages their replacement with healthy Everyday options. Water, plain milk and juice are also recommended. Flavoured milk is also a substitute despite its sugar content, as it provides a source of calcium – which is important for growing children.

Diet and no-sugar soft drinks are classified as Occasional drinks, and can be included on canteen menus.

This provides choice for students, while focussing on increasing availability of healthy choices.

14. Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Can they sell Coke, for example?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I do not think that Coke reaches the 3½ star health rating. I would like to check that to be absolutely sure but I am fairly sure it does not and is not able to be provided.

ANSWER:

Sugary soft drinks, such as Coke, cannot be sold in canteens in NSW government schools. Drinks containing caffeine should not be sold in primary school canteens and energy drinks should not be sold in primary or secondary school canteens.

Diet and no-sugar soft drinks are classified as Occasional drinks, and can be included on canteen menus.

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15. The CHAIR: Do the schools try to enforce any control over children leaving the school grounds at lunchtime?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to get back to you around what ages and what the guidelines are for schools about children leaving school grounds in secondary school.

ANSWER:

Parents are responsible for their child's attendance at school. Any absence from school must be explained including any part of the day when not at school, and this includes students leaving school during a lunch break.

Each school has attendance procedures on how partial absences are managed. This is usually administered through the school office prior to leaving school grounds.

The partial absence is time stamp recorded. Schools should issue a leave docket with time of departure to students who have permission to leave the school grounds during normal school hours.

Students who have flexible timetables, such as secondary students who are participating in alternative pathways to complete their High School Certificate course, may also leave at lunch time as they may not be required at school.

Any student off school premises during school hours located by an authorised attendance officer or police, can be directed to return to school.

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- 16. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** My colleague Mr Field asked you about food advertising on school grounds. Is there any policy around general advertising that is either external or is internally facing school grounds?
Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would like to take that on notice.

ANSWER:

The Department of Education's (DoE) Sponsorship Policy and Commercial Arrangements – School-Based Activity Policy and their implementation guidelines address advertising that is either external or internal facing on school grounds.

In summary, principals may approve externally-facing advertising signage on school grounds in accordance with DoE policy, providing signage accords with local government requirements. Signs promoting unhealthy foods are considered inappropriate under DoE policy. Advertising on school grounds targeting students is not permitted under DoE policy.

The policies and guideline documents may be found at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/commercial-arrangements-school-based-activities-policy> and <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/sponsorship-policy>.

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17. The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: One of things you provided us in the Great Choice program pack is a card with what seems to be some sort of reward program. Is there any definition around what that reward is or do school canteens have their own scope with that?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes, I think they have their own scope and the school community can decide that in the spirit of the program, which is obviously encouraging healthy eating.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It might be a discounted healthy food product or the like? A free banana?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes. I am aware that there is one school that has very cheap frozen fruit of a lunchtime, like a frozen strawberry or something like that, so different things like that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Do the private contractors that were discussed before have access to all of this material and use it as well?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: They do, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Do you know many of them that do? I know you said there are pretty much five larger providers that provide a lot of those. I think you outlined it was 384. Are many of them signed on to the program?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to come back to you with exactly how many of those and what the breakdown is.

ANSWER:

The 'Great Choice' Resource Kit is a suite of resources for school canteens to check the star rating for all items and ingredients; get ideas from what other canteens are doing, and to check whether the canteen meets the Healthy Food Canteen Strategy Food and Drink Criteria.

The 'Great Choice' Resource Kit was developed as a promotional kit to assist schools in implementing the NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy, encouraging students to make a 'great choice' in selecting healthy food when they purchase from the canteen.

The kit was distributed to all NSW public schools in July 2018.

The voluntary menu check was introduced in Term 2 2018.

Four school canteens managed by the ten largest licenced canteen providers are currently verified as 'Healthy School Canteens' with a large number working closely with Education and Health to achieve this status.

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18. The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: Have you either of you received any feedback on or reviews of the Active Kids rebate? There are students that are indicating that they might be benefiting from it.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to take that question on notice. I am not aware.

ANSWER:

The department's Learning and Teaching Directorate does not have any data in relation to the Active Kids rebate. The program is managed by the Office of Sport.