

Right Bite Strategy

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The **Right Bite** strategy, developed as a government initiative to remove junk food from schools and preschools is officially underway.

Under the State Strategic Plan the government has a goal to increase the number of South Australians within the healthy weight range by 2014.

The Healthy Food in Schools and Preschools project is one of the initiatives to support the government achieve its target to address the issue of obesity within the community.

As we know, education is central to make lasting changes. The **eat well SA schools and preschools healthy eating guidelines** (HEGs) released in 2004, provides a framework for schools and preschools to address healthy eating and well being through six interrelated strands:

- Curriculum
- The learning environment
- Food Supply
- Food Safety
- Food related health support planning and;
- Working with families, health services and industry

The **Right Bite** strategy builds on the HEGs framework and takes a whole of school or preschool approach to food supply and will play an important part in educating young children and students to make healthier choices when it comes to food and drink.

The **Right Bite Easy Guide** has proven very popular since it was released to all schools and preschools after it was officially launched by Education Minister Jane Lomax Smith and Health Minister John Hill at the Royal Adelaide Show last year.

Under the **Right Bite** Food Spectrum, food and drink is classified into three categories according to their nutritional value:

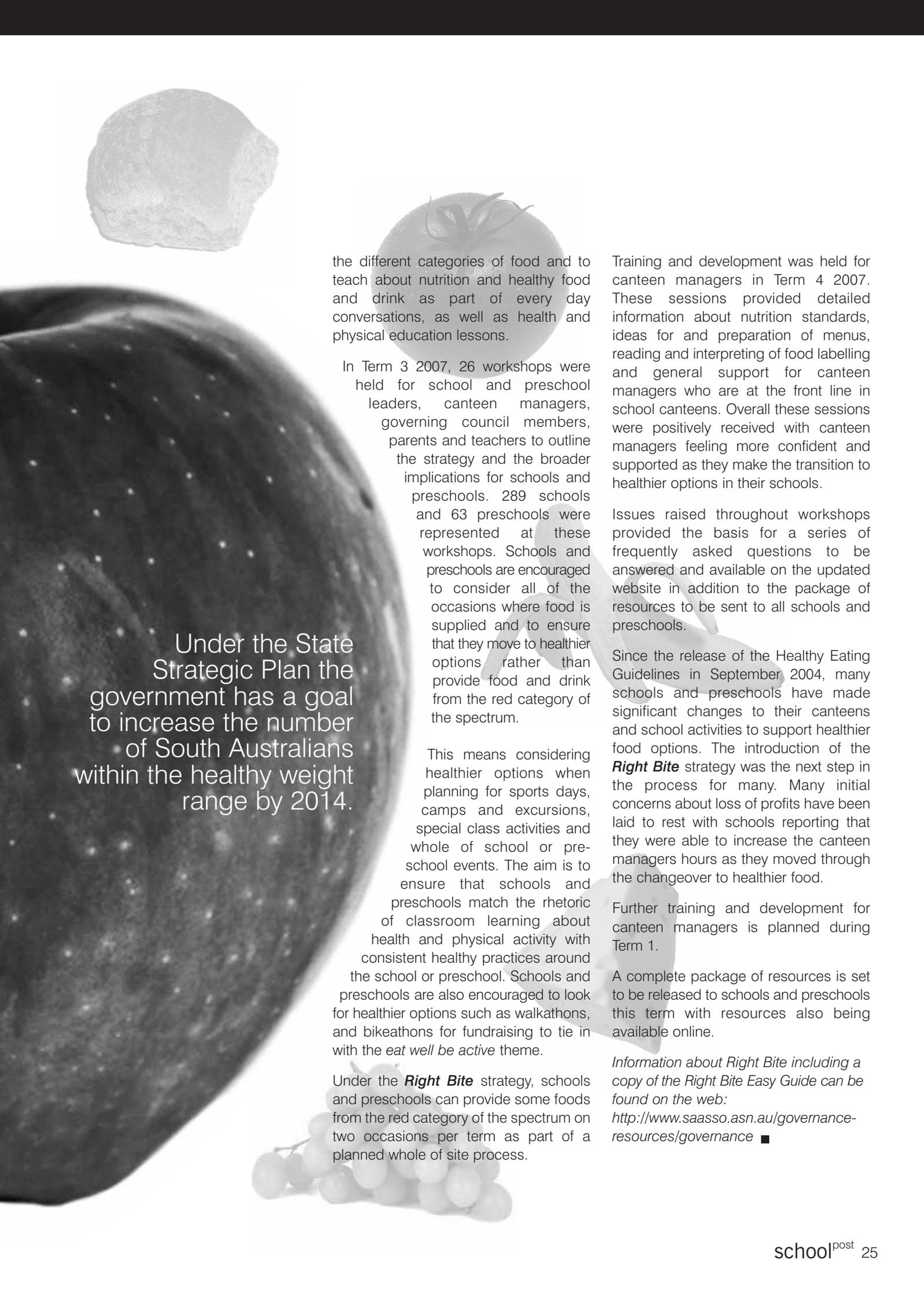
Green – Choose Plenty = the best choice for schools and preschools

Amber – Select Carefully = food and drinks that should be selected carefully

Red – Occasionally = food and drinks high in fat, sugar and/or salt, banned from sale in canteens and vending machines from the commencement of this school year. Red category food and drinks include all sugar and artificially sweetened drinks, energy drinks, sports water and fruit drinks; all types of confectionery; and all deep fried foods.

The ban on these foods also applies to outsourced canteens and delis that supply local schools and preschools.

The **Right Bite Easy Guide** with its colourful poster has made understanding food and nutrition very easy. The project team has received requests for hundreds of copies of the Easy Guide, to send home to families and to support class teachers as they work with children and students to understand



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the different categories of food and to teach about nutrition and healthy food and drink as part of every day conversations, as well as health and physical education lessons.

In Term 3 2007, 26 workshops were held for school and preschool leaders, canteen managers, governing council members, parents and teachers to outline the strategy and the broader implications for schools and preschools. 289 schools and 63 preschools were represented at these workshops. Schools and preschools are encouraged to consider all of the occasions where food is supplied and to ensure that they move to healthier options rather than provide food and drink from the red category of the spectrum.

This means considering healthier options when planning for sports days, camps and excursions, special class activities and whole of school or pre-school events. The aim is to ensure that schools and preschools match the rhetoric of classroom learning about health and physical activity with consistent healthy practices around the school or preschool. Schools and preschools are also encouraged to look for healthier options such as walkathons, and bikeathons for fundraising to tie in with the *eat well be active* theme.

Under the **Right Bite** strategy, schools and preschools can provide some foods from the red category of the spectrum on two occasions per term as part of a planned whole of site process.

Training and development was held for canteen managers in Term 4 2007. These sessions provided detailed information about nutrition standards, ideas for and preparation of menus, reading and interpreting of food labelling and general support for canteen managers who are at the front line in school canteens. Overall these sessions were positively received with canteen managers feeling more confident and supported as they make the transition to healthier options in their schools.

Issues raised throughout workshops provided the basis for a series of frequently asked questions to be answered and available on the updated website in addition to the package of resources to be sent to all schools and preschools.

Since the release of the Healthy Eating Guidelines in September 2004, many schools and preschools have made significant changes to their canteens and school activities to support healthier food options. The introduction of the **Right Bite** strategy was the next step in the process for many. Many initial concerns about loss of profits have been laid to rest with schools reporting that they were able to increase the canteen managers hours as they moved through the changeover to healthier food.

Further training and development for canteen managers is planned during Term 1.

A complete package of resources is set to be released to schools and preschools this term with resources also being available online.

Information about Right Bite including a copy of the Right Bite Easy Guide can be found on the web:

<http://www.saasso.asn.au/governance-resources/governance> ■