

Protocol of a policy intervention with local governments to improve access to healthier foods and beverages at community events

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Few Australians consume dietary patterns consistent with the recommendations of the Australian Dietary Guidelines.^(1,2) Food choices directly affect weight status, and poor diet is a leading risk factor for early deaths.⁽³⁾ What people eat is impacted by the food available in their immediate surroundings. Improving access to healthy foods and beverages is identified as a key outcome in the East Metropolitan Health Service Obesity Prevention Strategy (Perth, Western Australia). As part of their duty towards public health, some of the 13 local governments in the geographic area plan to improve access to healthy foods and beverages at the community events they organise. Foods and beverages at community events are typically provided by food trucks. There are many different policy approaches that local governments could take to increase the number of healthier foods and beverages available from food trucks at community events, but it is unclear what type of interventions would be acceptable and feasible to local governments and food truck operators. This project aims to gather the views of local government officers and food truck operators, develop recommendations to assist local governments in putting intervention plans into action, and evaluate the implementation of these recommendations. A menu assessment scoring tool, assessing the ratio of recommended nutritious to nutrient-poor discretionary items, will be used to gather baseline data on access to healthy foods and beverages at past community events. Interviews will take place with 15–25 local government officers whose job role relates to community events or public health planning. Interviews will also take place with owners of 15–25 food trucks that have previously attended community events. Phase 1 will involve qualitative interviews with all participants on the processes and logistics in relation to food truck attendance at community events. In phase 2, the same participants will be interviewed about the acceptability and feasibility of a range of possible interventions. Some examples of possible interventions are the provision of rental discounts or free promotion by local governments for food trucks with healthy food and beverages on their menu. Interview audio-recordings will be analysed using an inductive approach to determine the most important themes. Using these insights, researchers will produce an inventory of recommended actions for local governments to choose from, to help them meet their objective of improving access to healthy foods and beverages at community events. After the implementation of any of the recommended actions, the menu assessment scoring tool will be used at a future community event to evaluate the interventions' impacts on access to healthy foods and beverages.

References

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3. Forouzanfar MH, Afshin A, Alexander LT, *et al.* (2016) *Lancet* **388** (10053), 1659–1724.