



Why consistency is key to healthy food environments in the south west

By integrating the A Better Choice initiative into their business as usual, South West Hospital and Health Service is making an incredible contribution to the wellbeing of their staff and visitors.

Health and Wellbeing Queensland's [A Better Choice](#) (ABC) strategy aims to encourage healthier food and drink options in healthcare facilities across the state, including at South West Hospital and Health Service (SWHHS).

SWHHS is a rural and remote public health service in Queensland, with hospitals at Roma, Charleville and St George. SWHHS has eight multipurpose health services, three outpatient clinics, two residential aged care facilities and two community health centres.

A Better Choice champion

The ABC strategy really began to have an impact at SWHHS when it was taken on by their rural dietitian in 2021. SWHHS Dietitian, Jasmine, was supported by the executive to dedicate three hours per week over a year to progress the implementation of the ABC strategy.

The dedication of Jasmine's time and energy helped to overcome some initial challenges that SWHHS faced.

Communication is key

Jasmine believes that communication is paramount to creating sustainable healthy food environments. Jasmine developed a streamlined communication strategy which allowed her to communicate with retail facilities and vending suppliers with ease.

Through this communication strategy, Jasmine was also able to inform stakeholders and executives at every SWHHS site of ABC outcomes. Jasmine reported progress into SWHHS's 'risk register' to draw attention to the strategy among leadership and executives. This approach resulted in an action plan to guide the strategy's success, which helped to encourage executive endorsement and ongoing executive support.

This executive endorsement was wildly successful, with SWHHS meeting all of the ABC strategy performance targets in 2022.

A tailored approach

Jasmine reports that employing a multi-strategy approach was important when working with various retailers across SWHHS.

Her tailored approach to education and training canteen staff about the ABC strategy included:

A Better Choice

Healthy options made easy

- Working with multiple suppliers and wholesalers to source healthier products
- Utilising shelf labelling to support staff and consumers to look for healthier options
- Developing recipes and a recipe book for canteen staff
- Regularly visiting the cafe to maintain relationships, reinforce strategies and support healthy swaps
- Using [FoodChecker](#) to support auditing and reporting.

Jasmine reports that persistence, adaptability and flexibility are central to responding to the needs of the retail staff. Staff and management became committed to embedding healthy food environments into their business-as-usual practice, which has led to sustainable change.

Tips for ABC strategy success:

- Consistency and persistence is vital
- Co-design practical resources to ensure maximum benefit
- Obtain executive support to champion change.

'I went to the canteen nearly every day for a couple of months just to talk to the staff. I would refer back to the planogram to negotiate changes,'

Jasmine, Dietitian, SWHHS.



Healthier sandwich options at Bottle Tree Café, Roma Hospital.